

ICEBREAKER

Who Started the
Second World War?

Viktor Suvorov

Translated by Thomas B. Beattie



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For my brother

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SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE
AQUARIUM
SPETSNAZ

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*The West, with its imperialist ogres, has
become a centre of darkness and slavery.
The task is to destroy this centre, to the joy
and relief of the workers.*

STALIN, *Zhizn Narsional' nosti*,
No. 6 (1918)

To the Reader

Who started the Second World War? There is no single answer to this question. The Soviet government, for example, has repeatedly changed its official line on the issue.

On 18 September 1939, they stated in an official note that the government of Poland was the instigator of the war. On 30 November 1939, however, Stalin named other culprits in the newspaper, *Pravda*: 'France and Britain . . . attacked Germany, thereby taking upon themselves the responsibility for the present war,' he wrote. By 5 May 1941, the story had changed again : in a secret speech to graduates of military academies, Stalin laid the responsibility on Germany.

After the war had ended, this circle of 'culprits' grew. Stalin announced that the most blood-stained war in the history of humanity had been started by all the capitalist countries in the world – in other words, all the sovereign states in the world including Sweden and Switzerland, but excluding the Soviet Union.

Stalin's view has long been established in communist mythology. During the times of Khrushchev and Brezhnev, and as recently as Andropov and Chernenko, these accusations against the rest of the world were frequently repeated. Under Gorbachev, much is changing in the Soviet Union, but Stalin's view about who started the war remains unchallenged. Lieutenant-General P. A. Zhilin, chief historian of the Soviet Army, repeated during the Gorbachev era that 'the perpetrators of the war were not only the imperialists of Germany, but of the whole world'. (*Red Star*, 24 September 1985)

I would like to suggest that, from the beginning of the war, the Soviet communists made accusations against every country in the world with the deliberate intention of concealing their own role as its instigators.

After the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles deprived Germany of the right to a strong army and offensive weapons, including tanks, military aircraft, heavy artillery and submarines. German commanders were unable to use German territory to train for the waging of offensive wars. So they began to make their preparations in the Soviet Union. Everything possible was done, on Stalin's orders, to enable German commanders to carry out military training on Soviet territory. They were given training classes, artillery and shooting ranges, as well as tanks, heavy artillery and military aircraft which, under the terms of the Treaty,

they had no right to receive. Similarly, German commanders were given access to Soviet tank-manufacturing plants, the most powerful in the world. *Look, remember and copy.* From the 1920s on, sparing neither resources nor effort, nor indeed time, Stalin revived the strike power of German militarism. Certainly not against himself. For what purpose? There is only one answer – so that war would be declared on the rest of Europe.

Stalin understood that a powerful, aggressive army does not start a war by itself. A mad, fanatical leader is also needed. Stalin did a great deal to see that just such a leader should appear at the head of the German nation. Once the fascists had come to power, Stalin persistently and doggedly pushed towards war. The high point of these efforts was the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact. In this pact, Stalin guaranteed Hitler freedom of action in Europe and, in effect, opened the floodgates of the Second World War.

Even before the Nazis came to power, the Soviet leaders had given Hitler the unofficial name of 'Icebreaker for the Revolution'. The name is both apt and fitting. The communists understood that Europe would be vulnerable only in the event of war and that the Icebreaker for the Revolution could make it vulnerable. Unaware of this, Adolf Hitler cleared the way for world communism by his actions. With his *Blitzkrieg* wars, Hitler crushed the Western democracies, scattering and dispersing his forces from Norway to Libya. This suited Stalin admirably. The Icebreaker committed the greatest crimes against the world and humanity, and, in doing so, placed in

Stalin's hands the moral right to declare himself the liberator of Europe at any time he chose – while changing the concentration camps from brown to red.

Stalin understood better than Hitler that a war is won by the side which enters it last and not by the one which goes into it first. Stalin granted Hitler the doubtful honour of being the first, while he himself prepared for his unavoidable entry into the war after 'all the capitalists (will) have fought amongst themselves'. (*Stalin*, Vol. 6, p. 158)

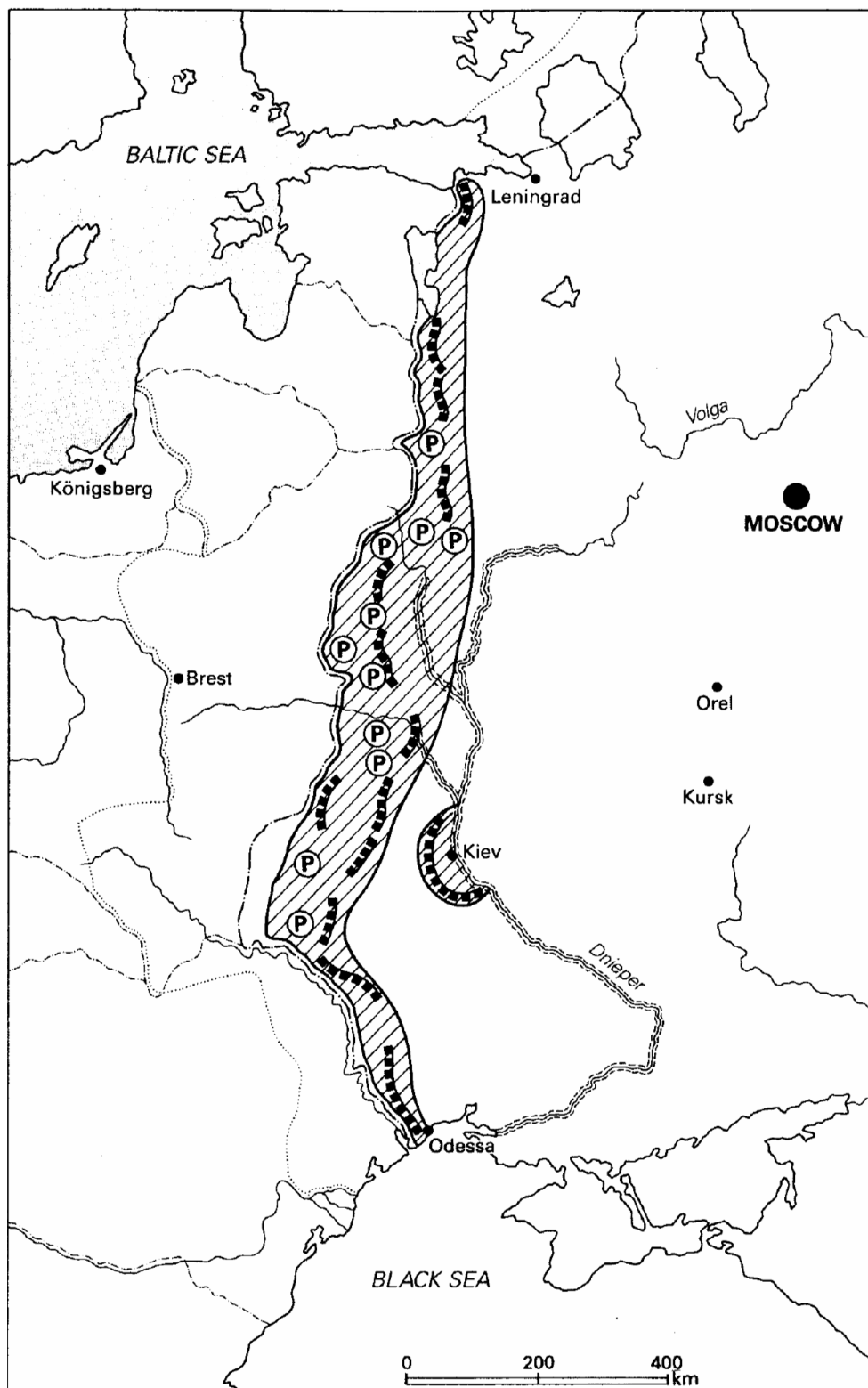
Much has been done to uncover the crimes of Nazism and find the butchers who perpetrated atrocities in its name. This work must be continued and stepped up. But while unmasking fascists, one must also expose the Soviet communists who encouraged the Nazis to commit their crimes, so that they could avail themselves of the results of these crimes.

The communists weeded their archives thoroughly a long time ago, but what still remains preserved there is almost inaccessible to researchers. I was fortunate enough to work briefly in the archives of the Soviet Ministry of Defence, but quite intentionally I am making little use of secret archival material. Overt Soviet publications are my main source. Even these are quite sufficient to place Soviet communists in the dock with Nazis.

My chief witnesses are Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, and all the Soviet wartime marshals and many leading generals. The Soviet communists admit that they used Hitler to unleash a war in Europe, and prepared a sudden blow at Hitler himself in order to seize a Europe which had been destroyed by him. The value of my sources lies in the fact that it is the criminals themselves who speak of their own crimes.

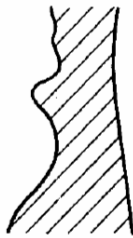
I know that on the communist side there are many apologists. I took the communists at their word, so let us allow them to defend themselves independently.

Viktor Suvorov



MAP I

As soon as Britain and France declared war on Germany, the Red Army began to destroy its own defensive systems. The Soviet Command was no longer interested in defending its own territory.



The 'death' zone is a security zone against a surprise attack from the West. Inside this zone, all transport, communications and water supply systems and industrial installations were made ready for demolition. Minefields and other engineered obstacles were set up to a depth of up to 150 kilometres. The zone was completely cleared of mines in the autumn of 1939.



Partisan detachments and bases had been set up in peacetime. They were dissolved in September 1939.



In the fortified regions of the 'Stalin Line', the work of demilitarization and destruction began in autumn 1939.



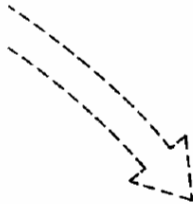
The combat operations zone of the Dnieper Naval Flotilla. The Flotilla was disbanded in June 1940.

MAP 2

The First Strategic Echelon of the Red Army.



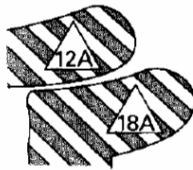
The Soviet invasion armies of the First Strategic Echelon. Behind them, another seven Soviet armies were making their way to the frontier.



The deployment of the First Strategic Echelon rendered the defence of the Soviet Union almost impossible. Even a very low-powered strike by the enemy in this direction would have led immediately to the loss of five Soviet armies, including the 9th, which was the most powerful in the world, and the loss of vast material wealth, highly fertile lands, the undefended bases of the Black Sea fleet, and strategic air bases. It was precisely such a strike which the First German Tank Group delivered in June 1941 . . .



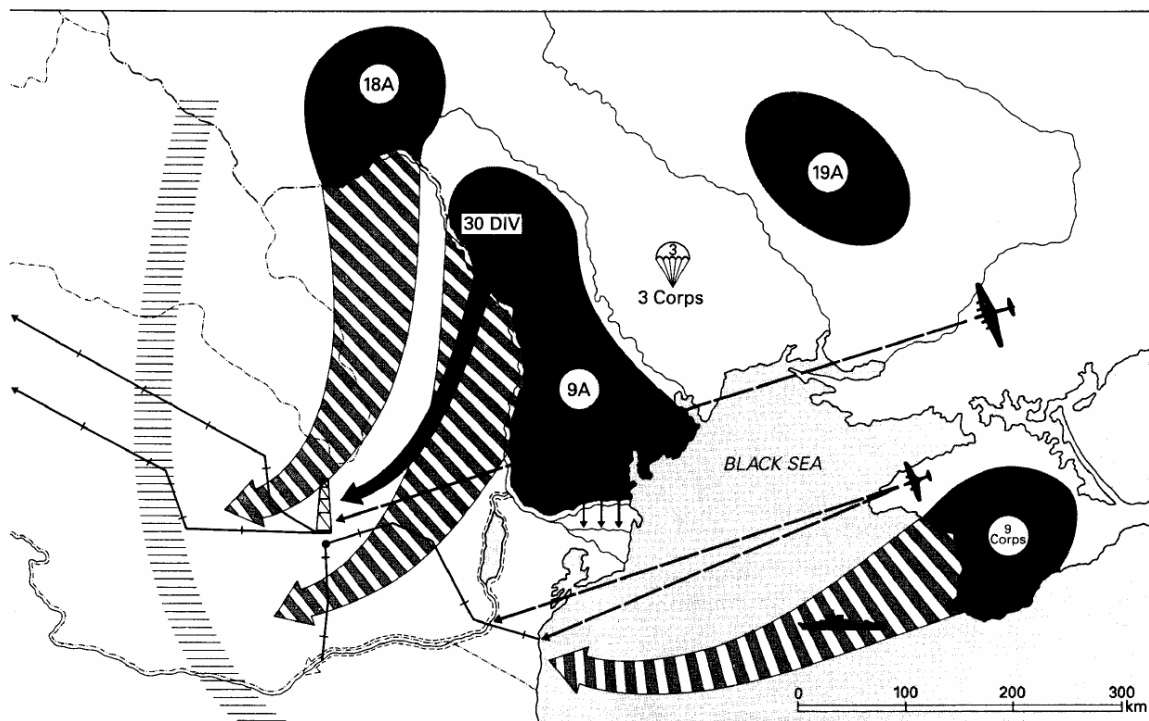
The 9th Army was concentrated not on the German border, but on the frontier with Rumania. A 9th Army strike at Rumania would be a strike at the undefended oil 'heart' of Germany.



The mountain invasion armies. This was the only possible direction in which they could have moved, along undefended ridges. They would have made it possible both to cut Germany's oil 'jugular' and to prevent the movement of German reserves into Rumania.

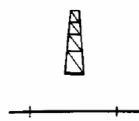


The 'first wave' airborne corps. Another five airborne corps were secretly being formed deep inside the Soviet Union.



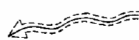
MAP 3

How the Red Army was prepared to seize and destroy the Rumanian oil-fields.

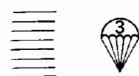


The Ploesti oil-fields, Germany's chief source of oil.

The main pipelines for supplying oil to Germany and for loading it on to river- and sea-going tankers.



The Soviet Danube Naval Flotilla and the only possible way of using it in an offensive war. In a defensive war, the Flotilla would be unnecessary.



The Third Airborne Corps and the zone of its possible operational use. The Corps was set up in April 1941.

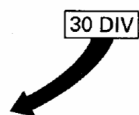


The 9th Army was secretly deployed on 14 June 1941, as TASS stated that the Soviet Union was not preparing for war.



The combat task of the 9th Army, according to the evidence of Air Marshal A. Pokryshkin.

The assault crossing of the Danube by divisions of the 9th Army's 14th Rifle Corps. Previously prepared and carried out in the first days of the war.



The 30th Mountain Rifle Division, part of the 9th Army, and the only place where it could be used for its intended purpose.



The 18th (Mountain) Army, secretly deployed on 13 June 1941, and the only possible direction which its operations could have taken. There are no other mountains in this region.



The 19th Army, the most powerful in the Second Strategic Echelon, was transferred from the Northern Caucasus. It contained mountain rifle divisions which could only have been used in Rumania.



The 9th Special Rifle Corps, in collaboration with the Black Sea Fleet, began intensive training in carrying out a naval assault landing operation on an enemy shore.

And overleaf



The Black Sea Fleet subjected the principal Rumanian oil port of Constanza to an artillery bombardment in the first days of the war.



The 4th Long Range Bomber Corps had Ploesti as its principal target in the event of war.



The 63rd Air Brigade of the Black Sea Fleet was specially trained to raid targets in the oil producing industry including, in the first days of the war, Constanza and the strategic pipelines which cross the Danube.

CHAPTER I

The Road to Happiness

*We are the Party of the class which is on the
way to
the conquest of the world.*
FRUNZE (Report to the military
delegates sent to the XI
Congress of the RKP (b) (1922))

Marx and Engels foretold a world war and lengthy international conflicts which would last 'fifteen, twenty, fifty years'. The prospect did not frighten them. The authors of *The Communist Manifesto* did not call on the proletariat to prevent war; on the contrary, they saw it as desirable. War was mother to the revolution. The result of a world war, in Engels' words, would be 'general exhaustion and the creation of conditions for the final victory of the working class'. (Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Works*, Ch. 21, p. 351)

Marx and Engels did not live to see the world war, but a successor in their cause was found for them in Lenin. From the earliest days of the First World War, Lenin's party came out in favour of the government of their own country being defeated, so that the 'imperialist war might be changed into a civil war'.

Lenin calculated that left-wing parties in other countries would also come out against the governments of their own countries and the imperialist world war would be transmuted into a world civil war. This did not happen. Without abandoning hopes for a world revolution, as early as autumn 1914 Lenin adopted a minimum programme. If world revolution were not to result from world war, everything possible had to be done to make a revolution happen in at least one country; it did not matter which one. 'When the proletariat has conquered that country, it will stand against all the rest of the world,' fomenting disorders and uprisings

in other countries, 'or coming out against them directly with armed force.' (*About the Slogan of the ' United States of Europe'*)

For Lenin, as for Marx, world revolution remained the guiding star, and he did not lose sight of this goal. But according to the minimum programme, the First World War would only facilitate a revolution in one country. How, then, would the world revolution take place thereafter? Lenin gave a clear-cut answer to this question in 1916: as a result of the second imperialist war. (*The Military Programme for the Proletarian Revolution*})

Perhaps I am mistaken, but having read much of what Hitler wrote, I have certainly found no indications that in 1916 Adolf Schickelgruber was dreaming of the Second World War. But Lenin was. What is more, he was laying down the need for such a war as the theoretical base for the building of socialism throughout the world.

Events developed apace. The revolution in Russia occurred the following year. Lenin hastened there from exile. In the maelstrom of confusion and a total absence of authority, he and his party, small but militarily organized, seized power in a *coup d'etat*. In March 1918, he concluded the Brest-Litovsk peace agreement with Germany and its allies. At that time Germany's position was already hopeless. Lenin of course understood this. The peace he signed therefore freed his hands to strengthen, through civil conflict, the communist dictatorship inside Russia, and gave Germany considerable resources and reserves to continue the war in the West, which was exhausting both Germany and the Western allies.

By concluding a separate deal -with the enemy, Lenin betrayed Russia's allies. But Lenin also betrayed Russia itself. At the beginning of 1918, the victory of France, Britain, Russia, the United States and other countries over Germany and its allies was already inevitable. Russia had lost millions of soldiers and was fully entitled to be numbered among the victors, alongside her western allies. But Lenin did not need such a victory. He needed world revolution. Lenin recognized that the Brest-Litovsk peace had been concluded not in the interests of Russia, but in the interests of world revolution, in the interests of establishing communism in Russia and other countries. Lenin admitted that he had placed worldwide dictatorship of the proletariat and world revolution 'above all national sacrifices'. (Central Committee report on the VIII Congress of the RKP (b) (1919)) He even gave away to Germany, without a fight, a million square kilometres of the most fertile lands and the richest industrial regions of Russia's western territories, and paid out a war indemnity in gold. Why?

The reason is that the Brest-Litovsk 'peace' rendered millions of Russian soldiers unnecessary. No longer under the control of any authority, these millions went back to their homes, breaking the foundations of the state system and the newly born democracy on the way. Brest-Litovsk marked the beginning of the ferocious civil war; while brother fought brother, the communists strengthened and extended their power until, after a few years, the entire country was under their control.

Brest-Litovsk was directed not only against the national interests of Russia, but against Germany as well, and in both its sense and spirit it served as a prototype of the Molotov— Ribbentrop pact. Lenin's calculation in 1918 was exactly the same as Stalin's in 1939. Let Germany fight in the West, let Germany and the Western allies exhaust themselves one after the other to the greatest extent possible; we ourselves shall help Germany at any price to exhaust herself to the very limit, and then act.

While the peace agreement with Germany was being signed on Lenin's orders in Brest-Litovsk, intensive work was being undertaken in Petrograd to prepare the overthrow of the German Government. At that time, the communist German-language newspaper, *Die Fackel*, with a circulation of 500,000, was being published in Petrograd. SPARTAK, the German communist group, had been set up in Petrograd in January 1918, even before the Brest-Litovsk agreement was signed. Two other newspapers, *Die Weltrevolution* and *Die Rote Fahne*, also saw the light of day, not in Germany, but in communist Russia, again on the orders of Lenin who had signed the 'peace' with Germany. In the twenties, communism was striking deep roots in Germany. Indeed, Lenin set his hand to this precisely at the time when Germany was losing the war in the West and he had extracted a 'peace' agreement from her at her most vulnerable.

Lenin's calculation was exact. The German Empire would not be able to withstand the colossal pressure of a war of attrition; in fact it led to the downfall of the empire - and revolution. Lenin immediately annulled the treaty. Communist states strikingly similar to Lenin's Bolshevik regime arose from the ruins of empires in war-torn Europe. 'We are on the threshold of world revolution!' Lenin exulted. He then threw away his minimum programme. He no longer spoke of the need for a Second World War, as he now believed that world revolution could be accomplished as a result of the First.

Lenin set up the Comintern to be, in the definition of its own name, the world communist party, and gave it the objective of setting up a world Soviet socialist republic.

But world revolution did not follow. Communist regimes in Bavaria, Bremen, Slovakia and Hungary proved to be weak and unviable. When it came to seizing and wielding power, left-wing parties in Western countries displayed fickleness and vacillation, and Lenin could only give them moral support. The entire might of the Bolsheviks was thrown on to the home fronts and into the battle against the peoples of Russia who did not want communism. It took Lenin until 1920 to strengthen his position sufficiently inside Russia. It was only then that Europe became the arena targeted for revolution.

The favourable moment in Germany had already passed. Even so, Germany in 1920 represented an eminently suitable field for waging class battles. She had been destroyed and humbled. All her ideals had been desecrated and humiliated. A ferocious economic crisis raged throughout the land. In March, she was shaken by a general strike in which, according to some sources, more than twelve million people took part. Germany was a powder keg and only one spark was needed to set it off.

The official march of the Red Army (Budennyi's March¹) includes the words 'Let's take Warsaw! Then Berlin!' Nikolai Bukharin, the Soviet communists' theoretician, proclaimed a more determined slogan in the newspaper, *Pravda*: 'Straight to the walls of Paris and London!'

In the path of the Red legions, however, lay Poland. There was no common frontier between the Soviet Union and Germany; in order to ignite revolution it was essential to destroy the barrier dividing them. This was free, independent Poland. Unfortunately for the communists, at the head of the Soviet troops was M. N. Tukhachevsky, a commander who did not understand the essence of strategy. Tukhachevsky's armies were defeated before reaching Warsaw and shamefully retreated. At a critical moment, Tukhachevsky found himself without any strategic reserve and this ensured that the outcome was a spectacular defeat.

Tukhachevsky's defeat did not happen by chance. Six months before the Soviet 'liberation campaign' set out for Warsaw and Berlin, Tukhachevsky had laid down, as a 'theoretical base', that strategic reserves were unnecessary in war. Strategy has simple but inexorable laws. Its main principle is concentration. At the decisive moment and in the decisive place, *overwhelming power* must be concentrated against the enemy's most vulnerable point. In order to concentrate power in this way, it is necessary to have it in reserve.

¹ *Originally, the song was dedicated to Simion Budennyi, legendary hero of the civil war and later Marshal of the Soviet Union.

Tukhachevsky, did not understand this, and paid the price. As a result, the revolution in Germany had to be put off until 1923.

The rout of Tukhachevsky's hordes in Poland had very unpleasant consequences for the Bolsheviks. Russia suddenly rose up in a desperate effort to throw off the communist dictatorship. The workers, of Petrograd, the cradle of the revolution, went on strike; they demanded bread, they demanded their promised liberty. The Bolsheviks put down their demonstrations, but a squadron of the Baltic Fleet came out on their side. The sailors from Kronstadt (the principal Soviet naval base, near Petrograd), the same ones who presented power to Lenin and Trotsky, demanded that the communists be thrown out of the Soviets, or councils. A wave of peasant demonstrations swept the country; and in the woods of Tambov, a group of peasants formed an anti-communist army which was powerful and well organized, but badly armed.

Tukhachevsky's brutality at Kronstadt became legendary. The monstrous shooting of peasants in Tambov Province is one of the most horrifying pages in history. The author of this page is Tukhachevsky. The twentieth century has known quite a few villains such as Yezhov, Himmler and Pol Pot. By the amount of blood he has spilt, Tukhachevsky has fully earned his place alongside them, for in his time Tukhachevsky was the forerunner of most of these scoundrels!

In 1921 Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy, or NEP. There was nothing new in this plan, which boiled down to little more than good old capitalism. It is accepted that Kronstadt and Tambov were important reasons impelling Lenin to introduce elements of free-marketeering and to loosen the ideological running knot on the neck of society. One must seek more deep for other reasons.

In 1921 Lenin understood that the First World War had not led to world revolution. According to Trotsky's advice, it was, necessary to go over to permanent revolution, dealing blow after blow at the weak links in free society and, at the same time, prepare for the Second World War, which would bring final 'liberation'. Before the actual introduction of the NEP in December 1920, Lenin claimed that 'such a new war is unavoidable . . .' (A speech to the Moscow Council on the first anniversary of the Comintern, 1920) 'We have ended one phase of wars and we must prepare ourselves for the next.' (A speech to the VIII Congress of the Soviets, 1920) For

this purpose NEP was introduced. Peace is a breathing space for war. So says Lenin, so said Stalin and so said *Pravda*. The communists had put their lands in order to strengthen and consolidate power, develop an exceptionally strong war industry, and to prepare the populace for future wars, battles and 'liberation campaigns'.

The introduction of elements of free-marketeering in no way signified that preparations for world revolution and the Second World War had been repudiated. By the following year the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics - the USSR - had been formed. The declaration that accompanied the formation of the USSR itemized four republics; it was intended to go on increasing this number until the whole world formed part of it.

The declaration accompanying the formation of the USSR was a *dear and direct declaration of war on the rest of the world*. This declaration is still in force. Nobody has revoked it. Between this declaration and that contained in *Mein Kampf*, there is a difference. Hitler wrote his book later and it represents the view of one individual. *Mein Kampf* literally means *my* struggle. The declaration behind the formation of the USSR is an official document on the principal objective of a vast state, which is to destroy and subjugate all other states in the world.

CHAPTER 2

The Main Enemy

If there is one place where a start can be made to arouse Europe to revolution, that place is Germany . . . and victory of the revolution in Germany will guarantee the victory of world revolution.

STALIN (*Sochineniya*, Vol. 6, p. 267)

In 1923, Germany was again on the brink of revolution. Lenin was no longer taking part either in governing the USSR or directing the Comintern. Stalin had seized almost all the reins of government, although the fact that he had done so had not yet been grasped by the country, the world, or even by his rivals.

This is how Stalin himself described his role in the preparations which were being made for revolution in Germany in 1923 : 'The German Commission of the Comintern, consisting of Zinoviev, Bukharin, Stalin, Trotsky, Radek and a number of German comrades, took a series of specific decisions that direct assistance be given to the German comrades to enable them to seize power.' (Speech to the Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the VKP (b), 1 August 1927)

Boris Bazhanov, Stalin's private secretary, gave a more detailed description of these preparations. The resources which were allotted to them were enormous. The Politburo decided at a secret meeting that nothing would be spared. All communists of German extraction living in the Soviet Union were prepared for action, as were all communists who spoke German. They were sent to Germany to do clandestine work. It was not just rank-and-file communists who were moved into Germany. Top-ranking Soviet leaders, including Vassily Schmidt, a Soviet People's Commissar, Joseph Unschlikht, deputy chairman of the GRU² and future head of military intelligence, and Karl Radek and G. L. Pyatakov, then members of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, were all sent to Germany as well. N. Krestinsky, the plenipotentiary representative, or ambassador in Germany, set to work with feverish intensity. The Soviet Embassy in its entirety became the nerve centre for organizing the revolution: instructions from Moscow, a flood of money which was immediately spent on mounds of communist literature, and an avalanche of arms and

² The Soviet Secret Police frequently changed its initials; this was another variation of the NKVD or the KGB.

ammunition all flowed through the Embassy. 'Unschlikht was given responsibility for recruiting, equipping and organizing the armed insurrectionist detachments which would carry out the *coup d'etat*. He was given the added responsibility of organizing a German secret-police force and of exterminating the bourgeoisie and the enemies of the revolution after the *coup* had taken place.' (B. Bazhanov, *Memoirs*, Paris 1980; p. 67)

The Soviet Politburo worked out the blueprint for the *coup* in detail and ratified it. The date on which it was to take place was fixed for 9 November 1923. But the revolution did not happen. The reasons for this were many.

First, the great bulk of the German populace chose the golden mean. They favoured the Social Democrats. The Communist Party did not have the support it needed among the masses. What is more, the Party was split into two factions, and as Lenin and Trotsky saw it, the Party leaders were not displaying sufficient determination. Secondly, Germany and the Soviet Union did not share a common frontier. As they had found four years previously, Poland lay between their two countries. Had there been a common frontier, then the Red Army would have been in a position to help the German Communist Party and its indecisive leaders.

The third and perhaps most important reason was that Lenin was dying, and for some time previously had ceased either to govern the Soviet Union or lead the world revolution. Lenin's heirs were many - Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov and Bukharin. Alongside these obvious rivals worked the modest Stalin, whom no one saw as an aspirant to power, but who, in Lenin's words, had already 'concentrated unlimited power in his own hands'. (*Political Will*, 1923)

The 1923 German revolution was directed from the Kremlin, but a fierce fight over who should control the world revolution was already under way. Not one of the evident claimants for power wanted to see his opponent in the role of leader of the German and therefore the European revolution. They jostled one another at the helm, issuing conflicting instructions to their subordinates. No one in such circumstances would end as victor. Wisely, Stalin did not join the helmsmen in their scramble for power. Instead, he decided first of all to devote his entire attention to consolidating his personal authority beyond all dispute.

In the years which immediately followed, Stalin demoted from the highest level of the Party all those who aspired to the post of leader, pushing them down to increasing depths until they ended up in the cellars of the Lubyanka jail. Once he had seized power, Stalin removed all obstacles standing in the way of the German revolution. He brought order to the German Communist Party and compelled it to carry out Moscow's instructions without question. He established a common frontier with Germany. He annihilated German social democracy. His position was both simple and based upon principles: it was necessary to fight against the Social Democrats and the pacifists, who were distracting the proletariat from revolution and war. On 7 November 1927, Stalin launched a slogan which said, 'It is impossible to finish with capitalism without first finishing with social democratism in the workers' movement.' (*Pravda*, No. 255, 6/7 Nov 1927) The following year Stalin declared that the communists' main task was to fight against social demo-

cracy : 'first of all, the struggle with social democratism along all lines, including and following from this the exposure of bourgeois pacifism'. (Stalin, *Sochineniya*, Vol. 11, p. 202) Stalin's attitude towards those who openly favoured war with, for example, the German Nazis, was just as simple and understandable. The Nazis had to be supported: leave it to the Nazis to eliminate the Social Democrats and the pacifists; let the Nazis start another war and destroy every state in Europe, every political party, every parliament, every army and every trade union. In 1927 Stalin already foresaw that the Nazis would come to power and he considered that this would be a positive event. 'It is precisely this fact which will lead to an exacerbation of the internal situation in the capitalist countries and to the workers coming out in favour of revolution.' (Stalin, *Sochineniya*, Vol. 10, p. 49)

Stalin supported the Nazis. Zealous Stalinists, such as Herman Remmele, who was a member of the Politburo of the German Communist Party, was quite open in his support of the Nazis, then eager for power. The part which Stalin played in the Nazis' seizure of power in Germany was considerable. As Leon Trotsky said in 1936: 'Without Stalin there would have been no Hitler, there would have been no Gestapo!' (*Bulletin of the Opposition (BO)*, Nos. 52-53, October 1936) Another statement he made in November 1938 reveals Trotsky's shrewdness and his knowledge of the point at issue. 'Stalin finally untied Hitler's hands, as well as those of his enemies, and thereby pushed Europe towards war.' He said this at a time when Chamberlain was rejoicing that there would be no war, Mussolini was regarding himself as a peacemaker and Hitler still had no intention of issuing a directive to attack Poland, even less France. At the moment when Europe was heaving a sigh of relief in the belief that there would be no war, Trotsky already knew both that war would quickly come and who would be to blame for it.

On 21 June 1939, intensive negotiations directed against Germany were then taking place between Britain, France and the Soviet Union. There was nothing to indicate that any surprises or complications might possibly be in store. 'The Soviet Union,' Trotsky said at the time, 'will move up to the German frontiers in all its massed strength just at the moment when the Third Reich becomes involved in the conflict for a new repartition of the world.' And indeed it was to happen precisely like that. Germany would fight in France, while Stalin, 'with all his massed strength', would crush the neutral countries on his western frontiers, thereby bringing himself nearer to the German border. On that same day of 21 June 1939 Trotsky made an even more extraordinary prophecy — that in autumn 1939 Poland would be occupied and that Germany intended to attack the Soviet Union in autumn 1941.

Trotsky made one minor error in being only a few months out as to when the war would begin against the Soviet Union. We shall see later that Stalin also made the same mistake.

Today, when we read some fifty years later the general pronouncements and predictions which Trotsky made, we can appreciate their accuracy. But this raises the question, how did he know all this? There is nothing secret about Trotsky. He had been one of the leaders of the communist *coup d'etat*. He was the creator of the Red Army and its leader. He had been the Soviet representative at the

negotiations in Brest-Litovsk. He was the first head of Soviet diplomacy. He was, along with Lenin, a recognized leader of the Soviet Union and leader of the world revolution. So he already knew very well what communism was, what the Red Army was and who Stalin was. Trotsky said that all his predictions were based on overt Soviet publications and in particular on the statements of George Dimitrov, the secretary of the Comintern.

Trotsky was the first person to understand Stalin's game, which was not understood by Western leaders, nor in the beginning even by Hitler. The game was quite simple. Trotsky himself became its victim and for that reason understood it. Working in league with Zinoviev and Kamenev, Stalin, creating a new group to activate prejudice against his fellow-revolutionary, removed Trotsky from power. Next, working in league with Bukharin, Stalin removed Zinoviev and Kamenev. Then Stalin kicked out Bukharin as well. Stalin followed this up by using Henrik Yagoda to remove Felix Dzerzhinsky's generation of Chekists. Then, using Nikolai Yezhov as leverage, he discarded Henrik Yagoda and his generation in their turn. With the help of Lavrenty Beria, Stalin finally ousted Yezhov and his generation. Stalin continued to play the same game in the international arena and Trotsky saw this too. For Stalin, German Nazism was an instrument which would break a path for the revolution through the solid ice - an icebreaker. German Nazism could begin the war and the war would lead to revolution. Let the icebreaker break Europe! Hitler could do what it did not suit Stalin to do. Stalin stated in 1927 that the second imperialist war was quite unavoidable, just as unavoidable, in fact, as the entry of the Soviet Union into that war. However, he did not want to take part in it himself from the first day. 'We shall move, but we shall be the last to move, in order to throw our weight on to the scales and tip the balance.' (Stalin, Vol. 7, p. 14)

In Europe Stalin needed crises, wars, destruction and hunger. Hitler could achieve all this for him. The more crimes Hitler committed in Europe, the better it would be for Stalin and the more reason he would have one day to send the Red Army into Europe as her liberator. Trotsky understood all this before the Second World War began and before Hitler became Chancellor. 'Let them come to power,' said Trotsky in 1932, explaining what Stalin's attitude was to the German Nazis, 'let them compromise themselves, and then ...'

From 1927 onwards, Stalin made every effort to support the Nazis who were then striving for power, although he did not of course do so publicly. After 1933, Stalin would do everything possible to push the Nazis towards war. When they entered the war, Stalin would order communists living in democratic countries temporarily to become pacifists, to demoralize the armed forces of the Western countries, to open the way for the Nazis and to capitulate to them with demands that the 'imperialist war' should be stopped, while at the same time undermining the war effort of their own countries and governments.

When he moved his icebreaker - German Nazism - against democratic Europe, Stalin had already passed the death sentence on it. Stalin had been planning to liquidate the Nazis for five years before they took over in Germany. 'Smash fascism, overthrow capitalism, establish Soviet power and free the colonies from slavery.' (Stalin, *Sochineniya*, Vol. n, p. 202)

Fascism was the hangman of Europe. Stalin supported the hangman, but even before the hangman had begun his work, Stalin had prepared the same fate for the hangman as awaited the hangman's victims.

CHAPTER 3

Why Arms for the Communists?

The people perish for want of steel.

Gounod's *Faust*

In 1933, the German colonel (later general) Heinz Guderian visited a Soviet locomotive engineering works at Kharkov. Guderian saw that, in addition to locomotives, the yard was producing tanks as a side product. The tanks were being produced at the rate of 22 a day.

When assessing the output of side products at one Soviet plant in peacetime, it must be remembered that in 1933 Germany was producing no tanks at all. In 1939, Hitler came into the Second World War with 3,195 tanks, that is, less than the Kharkov locomotive engineering works, working on a peacetime footing, produced in six months. When assessing the significance of an output of 22 tanks a day, it must also be borne in mind that in 1940, even after the Second World War had begun, the United States had *in all* only about 400 tanks.

What of the quality of the tanks which Guderian saw at the Kharkov engineering works? They were tanks which had been created by that American tank genius, J. W. Christie. Nobody, apart from the Soviet tank makers, appreciated Christie's achievements. One of Christie's American tanks was bought in the United States and sent to the Soviet Union under false documentation; the tank was described as an agricultural tractor. The 'tractor' was then produced in large numbers in the Soviet Union as a Mark BT - initials for the Russian words 'high-speed tank'. The first Mark BTs had a speed of 100 kilometres per hour. In the present day, there is not a tank crew anywhere which would not envy such a speed.

The shape of the hull of the Mark BT tank was simple and efficient. No tank at that time, not even those being produced for the United States Army, had a similar form of armament. The best tank in operation during the Second World War was the T34, a direct descendant of the Mark BT. The shape of its hull was a further development of the ideas of the great American tank builder. The principle of mounting its front armour plating in a sloping position was used, after the T34, on the German Panzer tank and then on all other tanks subsequently produced elsewhere in the world.

In the 1930s, practically all tanks in all tank-producing countries were designed and produced with the engine at the rear and the transmission system at the front. The Mark BT was an exception to this rule. The engine and the transmission system were both in the rear. It would take another quarter-century before the rest of the world understood the advantages of this structure.

The Mark BT tanks were continuously being improved. Their radius of action on one fuelling was increased to 700 kilometres. Fifty years later this is still a dream for the majority of tank crews. In 1936, Mark BT tanks produced in series were fording deep rivers underwater and along the river beds. Even now, at the end of the twentieth century, not all tanks used by the probable enemies of the Soviet Union have the same capability. Installation of diesel engines on the Mark BT tanks began in 1938. This was done elsewhere only ten or twenty years later. Finally, the Mark BT tank carried a weapons system which was very powerful for that time.

Having said so many positive things about the numbers and quality of Soviet tanks, one must note one minor drawback. It was impossible to use these tanks on Soviet territory.

The basic characteristic of the Mark BT tank was its speed. The quality so dominated all its other characteristics that it was even used in the name it was given.

The Mark BT is an aggressor tank. In all its characteristics, it is remarkably similar to the small but completely mobile cavalry warrior who emerged from the countless hordes of Genghis Khan. This great world conqueror vanquished all his enemies by delivering lightning strikes with great masses of exclusively mobile troops. Genghis Khan destroyed his enemies not, in the main, by force of arms, but by swift manoeuvre in depth. Genghis Khan did not need slow, sluggish knights, but hordes of light, fast-moving troops, capable of covering vast distances, fording rivers and moving deep into the rear of enemy territory.

That was just what the Mark BT tanks were like. By 1 September 1939, more of them had been produced than any other tank of any other type by any other country anywhere else in the world. The mobility, speed and radius of action were bought at the price of lighter and less thick, though still efficient armour. Mark BT tanks could only be used in an aggressive war, only in the rear of the enemy and only in a swift offensive operation, in which masses of tanks suddenly burst into enemy territory, bypassing his centres of resistance and racing into the depth of his heartland, where there were no enemy troops, but where his towns, bridges, factories, aerodromes, ports, depots, command posts and communications centres were situated.

The strikingly belligerent qualities of the Mark BT tank were also achieved by means of using a unique system of tracks and suspension. On unmade roads, the Mark BT operated on heavy caterpillar tracks, but once on a good road, the tracks were discarded and it then shot ahead on wheels, like a racing car. It is, however, well known that speed is not compatible with crosscountry performance. The choice is therefore between, on the one hand, a high-speed car which will go only on good roads, or on the other, a

slow-moving tractor, which will go anywhere. The Soviet marshals favoured the high-speed car. Thus, the Mark BT tanks were quite powerless on Soviet territory. When Hitler began Operation Barbarossa, practically all the Mark BT tanks were cast aside. It was almost impossible to use them off the roads, even with caterpillar tracks. They were never used on wheels. The potential of these tanks was never realized, but it certainly could never have been realized on Soviet territory. The Mark BT was created to operate on foreign territory only and, what is more, only on territory where there were good roads, as already observed.

Let us glance at the Soviet Union's neighbours. Then, as now, there were no good roads in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, China, Mongolia, Manchuria, or Northern Korea. Zhukov used Mark BT tanks in Mongolia, where the terrain is as flat as a billiard table. However, he used them only with caterpillar tracks and was dissatisfied with them. Off the roads, the tank tracks often raced round without gripping the surface, while the wheels, because of the comparatively great pressure they had to bear, whether they were off the road or even on unmade roads, simply spun round and sank into the earth while the tank remained stationary.

To the question, where could the enormous potential of these Mark B T tanks be successfully realized, there is only one answer: in central and southern Europe. The only territories where tanks could be used, *after* their caterpillar tracks were removed, were Germany, France and Belgium. To the question as to which is more important for the Mark BT tanks, the wheels or the caterpillar tracks, Soviet textbooks of that period give a clear-cut answer: the wheels. The most important characteristic of the MarkBT, speed, is attained on wheels. Caterpillar tracks are only a means for reaching foreign territory. For instance, Poland could be crossed on caterpillar tracks which, once the German auto-bahns had been reached, could then be discarded in favour of wheels, on which operations would then proceed. Caterpillar tracks were regarded as an auxiliary device which was supposed to be used only once in war, then to be discarded and forgotten. It is exactly like the parachutist who uses his parachute for the sole purpose of landing in enemy territory. Once there, he throws the parachute away so that he can operate without being burdened by a heavy load which he no longer needs. It was precisely this attitude which was adopted towards caterpillar tracks. Those Soviet divisions and army corps which were equipped with Mark BT tanks did not have on their complement any vehicles whose purpose it was to recover the caterpillar tracks which had been thrown away and bring them back. After the Mark BT tanks had discarded their tracks, they had to finish the war on wheels.

Some types of Soviet tanks were named after communist leaders, like the 'KV', for Klim Voroshilov,³ and the 'JS', for Joseph Stalin. Most Soviet tanks, however, were given a designation which contained the index letter 'T'. Sometimes, in addition to 'T', the index

³ Voroshilov was first a Marshal of the Soviet Union, one of Stalin's closest allies; he later became Chairman of the Supreme Soviet.

included the letter 'O' (which stands for the Russian word for 'flame-throwing'), 'B' (the initial letter of the Russian word for 'high speed') or 'P' (indicating 'amphibious'⁴).

Then in 1938, the Soviet Union began to work intensively on the production of a tank which bore the highly unusual index number of A-2O. What does 'A' mean? There is not one Soviet textbook which gives the answer to this question and to date it remains undeciphered by many experts. For a long time I sought an answer and finally found it at Factory No. 183. This plant produced locomotives, but had other, less 'peaceful' production on the go at the same time. People with great experience at this plant say that the original meaning of the index letter 'A' in this case stood for '*Autostradnyi*' — motorway. Personally I find this explanation convincing. The Mark A-20 tank was the latest development in the Mark BT family. The main characteristic of the Mark BT figured in its name, so why should the main characteristic of the Mark A-2O not be expressed in the same way? The purpose, I suggest, of the Mark A-20 was to reach the motorways on its caterpillar tracks and, once there, to discard the tracks, and convert itself into the king of speed.

At the end of the twentieth century the Soviet Union does not have one kilometre of highway which can be even remotely described as a motorway. Fifty years ago, and for long after that, there were no motorways in Soviet territory. Nor were there motorways in any of the countries which bordered the Soviet Union in 1938. One year later, however, in 1939, Stalin partitioned Poland under the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and thereby established a common frontier with a country which *did* have motorways. That country was Germany.

It is said that Stalin's tanks were not ready for war. That was not so. They were not ready for a *defensive* war on their own territory. They were, however, designed to wage war on others.

As it was for Soviet tanks, so it was for Soviet aircraft in both quality and numbers. Communist falsifiers of the facts say nowadays that the Soviet Union did of course have many aircraft, but the majority were inferior. They were obsolete planes and they therefore could be disregarded. Let us consider only the contemporary Soviet aircraft - the MIG-3, the Y A K-1, the PE-2, the IL-2; in doing so we shall in no way find ourselves discussing antiquated flying machines.

⁴ The Soviet Union was the only country in the world which produced amphibious tanks in massive numbers. In a defensive war, there is no need for a tank to pass over water. Therefore, when Hitler set Operation Barbarossa in motion, Soviet amphibious tanks had to be discarded because they were unsuitable for defensive warfare. Their production, like the production of the Mark BT tanks, stopped immediately.

Alfred Price was a British airman who, throughout his lifetime, flew 45 types of aircraft and logged more than 4,000 flying hours. This is what he thought of these 'antiquated flying machines':

The most heavily armed fighter in service in September 1939 was the Russian Polikarpov I-16, a progressive development of an aircraft which had first entered service in 1934 and fought in the Spanish Civil War ... In terms of armament. . . it had never been surpassed. The I-16 Type 17, which appeared in 1938, carried two synchronized 7.62 ShKAS machine guns on top of the engine cowling and two 20mm ShVAK cannon in the wings. The ShKAS had a rate of fire of 1,600 rounds per minute after synchronization and a muzzle velocity of 2,700 feet per second; the ShVAK had a rate of fire of 800 rounds per minute and a muzzle velocity of 2,600 feet per second. In both cases these figures were better than those for any comparable weapon and they conferred upon the Type 17 a weight of fire of more than double that of the Messerschmitt 109E-I and nearly three times that of the Spitfire. The hefty punch of this tubby Russian fighter was years ahead of its time . . . Those who believe that the Russians were backward peasants prior to the Second World War and advanced after it only because they were able to make use of German expertise might care to ponder these points. (Alfred Price, *World War II Fighter Conflict*, London 1975; pp. 18-21)

To this it must be added that in August 1939, Soviet fighters were the first aircraft in the world to use rockets as armaments in combat conditions. What is more, Soviet aircraft builders had created a plane, unique in the world, which had an armoured fuselage. The IL-2 was virtually a flying tank, with super-high-powered weaponry by any standard, including eight heavy rocket shells.

What does all this mean? Why was it that from the very first day of the war the Soviet Air Force yielded mastery in the air to the enemy? The answer is simple. Most Soviet pilots, including fighter pilots, had not been trained to fight air battles. So what had they been trained to do? They had been trained to strike at ground targets. The regulations of the Soviet fighter and bomber Air Force (BUFA-40 and BUBA-40) pointed Soviet pilots towards staging one grandiose, lightning offensive operation, in which the air force would catch the enemy air force napping with one blow and seize supremacy of the air. Even in 1929, the Soviet magazine, *War and Revolution*, published a basic article entitled 'The Initial Period of War'. This drew the conclusion, to be repeated in Soviet Air Force regulations, including those of 1940 and 1941, that 'it is highly advantageous to take the initiative and be first to attack the enemy. Once the air force has taken the initiative in attacking the airfields and hangars of the enemy, it can then count upon having supremacy in the air.' (*War and Revolution*, No. 9, pp. 19-20 (1929)) The Soviet air theoreticians did not have in mind some general enemy, but a clearly defined one. Alexander Lapchinsky, the chief Soviet air strategist, illustrated his books with very detailed maps of standard bombing targets. These included the railway junction at Leipzig, at the Friedrichstrasse in Berlin and its railway station, and other

such places. In explaining how Soviet territory had to be defended, Lapchinsky said 'a determined ground attack attracts enemy air forces towards itself like a magnet and serves as the best means of defending the country from them. The air defence of the country is not a manoeuvre from depth, but a manoeuvre into depth.' (*Vozdushnaya Armiya*, Alexander Lapchinsky, Moscow 1939; pp. 176-7) It was precisely for this purpose in 1941 that the entire Soviet Air Force was concentrated on the very frontiers of the country. For example, the field aerodrome of the 123rd Fighter Regiment was only two kilometres from the German frontier. In battle conditions an aircraft, in order to save fuel, takes off towards the enemy. Aircraft of the 123rd Regiment, like many others, were thus compelled to gain height after takeoff by flying over German territory.

Both during the war and after it, the Soviet Union built quite a few aircraft which were, at the same time, excellent and surprisingly simple. The greatest achievements of the Soviet Air Force, however, were not in building aircraft which would destroy enemy planes in the air. They lay in the building of aircraft which would destroy planes and other enemy targets on the ground. The IL-2 was in just such a category. Airfields were its most important targets. When he had created this aggressor aircraft, Sergei Ilyushin stipulated one minor defensive detail. The first model of the IL-2 had two seats. From one, the pilot flew the aircraft and attacked his targets, while seated behind him in the other the air gunner protected the rear of the aircraft from enemy fighter attack. Stalin personally telephoned Ilyushin and ordered him to discard the rear gunner and his machine gun, and to produce the IL-2 as a one-seater aircraft. Stalin, it seemed, needed the IL-2 for a situation in which not one enemy fighter would succeed in taking off. After Operation Barbarossa had been launched, Stalin rang up Ilyushin again and ordered him to produce the IL-2 as a two-seater aircraft, as before. In a defensive war even aggressor aircraft need to have some defensive armaments.

1927 was the year when Stalin took his place, finally and permanently, at the summit of power. From then onwards, he concentrated his attention not only on consolidating his dictatorship, but also on the problems of the whole communist movement and world revolution.

1927 was the year in which Stalin finally drew the conclusion that the Second World War was inevitable; that there had to be a decisive conflict with social democratic pacifism which was delaying its start; and that the Nazis, striving for power, had first to be supported and then destroyed.

The same year also marked the beginning of the industrialization of the Soviet Union. This was done through a series of five-year plans, the first of which began in 1927.

When the first five-year plan began, the Red Army had 92 tanks. When the plan was completed, it had more than 4,000. Even so, the military bias in the first five-year plan was not very noticeable. Most attention was paid to the industrial base which was to be created and which would subsequently produce arms, rather than to arms *per se*.

The second five-year plan continued the development of the industrial base. It produced coke ovens and open-hearth furnaces, great electrical power stations and oxygen plants, rolling and blooming mills, mines and pits. The production of arms was not yet the important issue. Even so, Stalin was not losing sight of it. 24,708 military aircraft were produced during the first two five-year plans.

Then came the third five-year plan, which should have been completed in 1942. This was the plan to turn out actual military products in enormous quantities and of very high quality.

Industrialization was bought at a high price, however. Stalin let the standard of living of the populace fall to a very low level. Vast reserves of gold, platinum and diamonds were sold to foreign markets. Churches and monasteries, imperial repositories and museums, were pillaged. Icons and valuable books were put on the foreign market. Paintings by the great masters of the Renaissance, collections of cut diamonds, and treasures from museums and libraries were all given over to export. Similarly, Stalin forced timber and coal, nickel and manganese, oil, cotton, caviar, furs, grain and much more on to the export market.

Then, in 1930, he began his notorious collectivization programme. The peasants were driven by force into collective farms, so that all their crops could be taken from them without payment. In communist jargon this was called 'transferring resources from agriculture to heavy industry'. The result of collectivization and the hunger which followed it was ten to sixteen million dead. Stalin, meanwhile, went on, throughout this period, selling five million tons of grain every year abroad.

Why was collectivization needed? For industrialization. Why industrialization? Not, in any way, to raise the standard of living of the nation. Life during the NEP, and before industrialization and collectivization, had been perfectly tolerable. Had Stalin been interested in the standard of living of the people, then he needed neither industrialization nor collectivization. He needed simply to preserve the NEP. Living standards now, however, reached an awesomely low level. Robert Conquest has recently published a book, *The Harvest of Sorrow* (1987), on these fearsome five-year plans, complete with pictures showing skeleton-like children. They portray a situation as bad as, if not worse than, those we have witnessed in communist Ethiopia or Pol Pot's Cambodia in recent times.

Industrialization and collectivization were intended to produce arms in vast quantities. Why did the communists want arms? To defend the people? The answer is no. If Stalin had sold only four million tons of grain a year instead of five for his motorway tanks, parachute silk and Western military technology, millions of children would not have died. Weapons are used in all countries to defend the population from appalling calamities - above all, their children, who are a nation's future. In the Soviet Union, it was the other way

round. In order to obtain arms, the populace, children included, were subjected to fearful disaster. Just one statistic will serve to underline its scale. In World War I Russia lost in all 2.3 million people. In *peacetime*, however, Stalin was responsible for the destruction of approximately five to seven times more people for the sake of acquiring motorway tanks and offensive aircraft. The communist turned out to be many times more terrible than the imperialist war.

The growth in Soviet military might was in no way dictated by an external threat, for it began before Hitler came to power. The annihilation of millions of children for the sake of obtaining armaments was going on whilst Stalin was making strenuous efforts to suppress western pacifists and at the same time raising up the Nazis. It may be objected that while Stalin sacrificed millions of people, he nevertheless created arms to defend the survivors. This is not valid. We have already seen, and shall see again, that the arms created were in no way suitable for the defence of his territory nor the protection of his people; indeed, he would be compelled either to use them in a way for which they were not intended, or to discard them altogether.

For precisely what, then, were these vast arsenals of arms intended, if not for the defence of the Soviet territory or populace?

CHAPTER 4

Why Stalin Partitioned Poland

*We are doing something which, if it succeeds, will
overturn the whole world and liberate the entire
working class.*

STALIN (*Sochineniya*, Vol. 13, p. 41)

On 22 June 1941, Nazi Germany suddenly attacked the Soviet Union. That is a historical fact. It is, however, a very strange fact. Before the Second World War, Germany did not have a common frontier with the Soviet Union. Consequently, Germany could not then have *made* an attack, still less a sudden one.

Germany and the Soviet Union had been separated by an uninterrupted buffer of neutral states. Before a Soviet—German war could take place, one condition above all others was necessary. The buffer of neutral states had to be destroyed. But who exactly destroyed this buffer; and why?

The buffer between Germany and the Soviet Union consisted for most of its length of at least two countries. Only at one point was it formed by one country: Poland. Poland was the shortest, most direct, most level and most convenient route lying between the Soviet Union and Germany. It was the narrowest part of the dividing wall. It is not hard to understand that it is precisely through here that any potential aggressor, intent on a Soviet—German war, would have to try to force a corridor. On the other hand, if either the Soviet Union or Germany did not want such a war, they would have to use all the strength of their armed forces, all of their national wisdom and all the force of their international authority to keep the enemy off Polish territory. If the worst came to the worst, war would have to be waged in Poland itself, so as to prevent an approach towards either frontier.

Hitler had declared his warlike intentions quite openly. Stalin was quick to call him publicly, a cannibal. Hitler of course could not attack Stalin, since they did not share a common frontier. So Hitler proposed to

Stalin that they make a joint effort to breach the wall that divided them. Stalin accepted this proposal with delight. He knocked down the Polish wall with enormous enthusiasm and forced a corridor in Hitler's direction. Hitler's motives towards Poland, as laid out in *Mein Kampf*, are understandable. But how can Stalin's actions be explained?

The first explanation, according to Soviet propagandists, is that, after having torn Poland to pieces and drowned it in blood, USSR moved her frontier westwards, that is, strengthened her security. This is a strange explanation. The Soviet frontier was indeed moved westwards by 200-300 kilometres, but at the same time Germany moved its frontier some 300-400 kilometres eastwards. As a result of this, the security of the Soviet Union was not enhanced; on the contrary, it was diminished. But this apart, there was an entirely new factor. This was the common Soviet-German frontier and hence the direct possibility of war, including a war of surprise attack.

The second explanation is that by stabbing Poland in the back at a time when she was engaged in a desperate struggle with the Nazis, USSR tried to *delay* the outbreak of the Soviet—German war. This is like saying that USSR started a fire in her neighbour's house in the expectation that it would not spread to hers.

The third explanation is that the unwillingness of France and Britain to sign a treaty with the USSR left Stalin with no option but to come to terms with Hitler. But why should France and Britain defend the Soviet Union, when the Soviet Union had proclaimed that its main aim was to overthrow democracy everywhere, including in France and Britain? The West did not care whether Hitler went east or not. The countries of Eastern Europe certainly did. If Hitler turned eastwards, they would be his first victims. Therefore the Eastern European countries were the natural allies of the Soviet Union. An alliance should be sought with them against Hitler. But Stalin did not seek such alliances. In cases where treaties did exist, the Soviet Union did not carry out her obligations. Stalin could have remained neutral, but chose instead to stab in the back those countries engaged in a struggle with fascism.

Once he had forced a corridor through the dividing wall, Hitler thought that he had done enough. He then turned his attentions to Western Europe, Africa, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. What ought Stalin to

have done, faced as he was with a breach in the wall some 570 kilometres wide and time in hand? He should have hastily reinforced his defences. The old frontier was a powerful line of fortified regions. It should have been strengthened and improved without delay. In addition to this, a second line of defence should have been built, and a third, and a fifth, and more. Mines should have been laid at once on roads, on bridges and in fields. Anti-tank ditches should have been dug and given anti-tank artillery cover. But none of this happened. Some time later, in 1943, the Red Army was preparing to repel an enemy attack in the Kursk Salient. Within a short period of time, Soviet troops succeeded in creating six continuous defensive strips - one behind the other - on a vast front, to a total depth of 250-300 kilometres. Each kilometre was saturated with trenches, dugouts, communication trenches, concealment shelters and gun positions. The average density of anti-tank and anti-infantry mines per kilometre was as high as 7,000, while the density of anti-tank weaponry reached the exceptionally high level of 41 guns in every kilometre, not counting field and anti-aircraft artillery, and tanks, dug into the ground. Thus a truly impenetrable defence was set up from scratch in a very short space of time in the open field.

In 1939 conditions which favoured defence were considerably better than in 1943. There were impassable forests, rivers and marshes. There were few roads and a lot of time. Nevertheless, at that moment the Soviet Union stopped producing anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns. Instead of rendering the area impassable, it was immediately made more passable. Roads and bridges were built in it, and the railway network was extended, strengthened and improved. Previously existing fortifications were demolished and covered with earth.

Ilya Starinov, a GRU colonel involved in this process, described what he saw:

The situation was becoming absurd. When we were faced by weak armies of comparatively small countries, our frontiers were really well and truly safe. When Nazi Germany became our neighbour the defensive installations put up by the engineers along the former frontier were abandoned and even partially dismantled. (I. Starinov, *Miny Zhdut Svoego Chasa*, p. 186)

The military engineering directorate of the Red Army indented for 120,000 delayed-action railway mines. In the event of an invasion by the German Army, this quantity would have been quite sufficient to paralyse the

entire railway network behind enemy lines, upon which the Germans would have been totally dependent. But instead of the number of mines ordered, only 120 arrived. (Starinov, *op. cit.*) Yet the mine is a very simple, very cheap and very effective weapon. The production of mines in the Soviet Union was enormous, but it was curtailed after the passage had been forced through the wall.

One breach in the wall was enough for Hitler. It was not enough for Stalin. Hitler, with Stalin's help, destroyed the authority of the state in only one country forming part of the dividing buffer. Stalin, without anybody's help, achieved this in three other countries, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, attempted to do the same in a fourth, Finland, and actively prepared to repeat the performance in a fifth country, Romania, after having seized a vast tract of Romanian territory. Only ten months after the 'non-aggression' pact was signed and by Stalin's own efforts, the dividing buffer from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea had been completely shattered. There no longer remained any neutral countries between Stalin and Hitler and thereby the conditions needed for attack were created.

During this short space of time, all of Stalin's western neighbours had become his victims. The appearance of Soviet troops in Lithuania meant that they had moved on to the real German frontier. Previously, the Soviet-German border passed through Polish-occupied territory. Now, Soviet troops had moved on to the frontier with East Prussia.

Communist historians have tried, though without any success, to devise answers to the question as to why Stalin agreed to help Hitler force a corridor through Poland. The question as to why Stalin smashed the entire buffer is one which they prefer not to raise. But Stalin himself gave a clear and precise answer to *that* unasked question:

History states [wrote Stalin] that when one country wants to go to war with another, even one which is not a neighbour, then it begins to seek frontiers across which it would be able to reach the frontiers of the countries it wishes to attack. (*Pravda*, 5 March 1936)

Did the Red Army intend to stop on the borders once it had reached them?

Here is S. K. Timoshenko, Marshal of the Soviet Union, on the subject:

In Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, the power of the landowners and capitalists, so hateful to the workers, has been abolished. The Soviet Union has grown significantly and has moved its frontiers westwards. The capitalist world has been compelled to yield and give ground. But it is not for us fighters of the Red Army to give ourselves airs or rest on our laurels! (*Order of the People's Commissar of Defence*, No. 400, 7 November 1940)

This is neither a speech nor a Tass report. It is an order of the Red Army. To the west of the Soviet borders lay only Germany and countries allied to her. Could the frontiers be moved further westward, at the expense of Germany?

CHAPTER 5

The Pact and its Results

Stalin was more cunning than Hitler, more cunning and more perfidious.

ANTON ANTONOV-OVSEENKO

(The Portrait of a Tyrant, New York 1980; p. 296)

Outwardly everything seemed equitable, a part of Poland for Hitler and a part for Stalin. However, just one week after the signing of the Pact, Stalin played his first dirty trick. Hitler began the war against Poland, while Stalin stated that his troops were not yet ready. He could have told Ribbentrop that before the Pact was signed, but he did not do so.⁵ Hitler began the war and found himself on his own. The result? He, and he alone, was branded the perpetrator of the Second World War.

Once he had begun the war against Poland, Hitler immediately found himself at war with France, that is, at war on two fronts. Every German schoolboy knew how a war on two fronts would turn out in the end for Germany.

Britain at once declared war on Germany. France could be dealt with, but Britain was an island. In order to reach it, long and serious preparations were necessary. A powerful fleet, roughly equal in strength to the Royal Navy, was also needed, as well as supremacy in the air. The war was thus already changing into what would become a long, drawn-out conflict.

Standing behind Britain was the United States which could, as it did in World War I, throw its inexhaustible power on to the scales at the most vital moment. The whole of the West became Hitler's enemy.

⁵ Known as the 'Non-Aggression Pact', which, by dividing Poland between the Soviet Union and Germany, was instrumental in the start of World War II.

Hitler could count on Stalin's friendship only so long as he was in a position of strength. In a protracted war against the West, Stalin would, of course, be obliged to dissipate this strength.

As far as Stalin was concerned, Poland had been partitioned, not in the Chancellery in Berlin, but in the Kremlin in Moscow. In effect, Stalin got the war he wanted, with a western nation destroying others around it, while Stalin remained neutral, biding his time. When, later, he got into serious difficulties, Stalin at once received help from the West.

In the end, however, Poland, for whose liberty the West had gone to war, ended up with none at all. On the contrary, she was handed over to Stalin, along with the whole of Eastern Europe, including a part of Germany. Even so, there are some people in the West who continue to believe that the West won the Second World War.

Hitler committed suicide; Stalin became the absolute ruler of a vast empire hostile to the West, which had been created with the *help* of the West. For all that, Stalin was able to preserve his reputation as naive and trusting, while Hitler went down in history as the ultimate aggressor. A multitude of books have been published in the West based on the idea that Stalin was not ready for war while Hitler was. In my view, the man who is ready for war is not the one who loudly proclaims himself prepared for it, but the man who wins it — by dividing his enemies and knocking their heads together.

Did Stalin intend to observe the Pact? Let Stalin speak:

The question of conflict must not be considered from the point of view of justice, but from the point of view of the demands of the political factor, from the point of view of the political demands of the Party at any given moment. (Speech to a session of the executive committee of the Comintern, 22 January 1926)

War can turn each and every agreement upside down. (Pravda, 15 September 1927)

The Party, in congresses at which Stalin spoke, correctly understood its leaders and gave them the appropriate, full authority:

The Congress stresses in particular that the Central Committee is given full powers at any moment to break all alliances and peace treaties with imperialist and bourgeois states and equally to declare war on them. (Resolution of the 7th Party Congress)

Incidentally, this Party decision has never been rescinded.

According to Stalin, 'A great deal depends upon whether we succeed in delaying the war, which is unavoidable, with the capitalist world, until that moment when the capitalists start fighting among themselves.' (*Sochineniya*, Vol. 10, p. 288) And: "The decisive battle can be considered imminent when all the class forces hostile to us have become sufficiently entangled with each other, when they are fighting sufficiently with each other, and when they have weakened each other sufficiently for the conflict to be beyond their strength.' (*Sochineniya*, Vol. 6, P- 158)

Stalin needed a situation in which 'the capitalists will fight each other like dogs'. (*Pravda*, 14 May 1939) The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact created just that situation. Quotations like these could be glimpsed in *Pravda*: 'Not only must they be taken by the throat, they must be destroyed.' (Marx, Vol. 2, p. 343) *Pravda* was transported with delight. The foundations of the earth are trembling,' it wrote. 'The ground slips from under the feet of peoples and nations. Glows are afire in the sky and the thunder of guns shakes seas and continents. Powers and states are blown away just like chaff in the wind. How excellent it is, how extraordinarily wonderful, when the world is shaken to its very foundations, when powers perish and greatness falls.' (*Pravda*, 4 August 1940) 'Every such war brings us closer to that happy time when murders among the people will no longer happen. (*Pravda*, 18 August 1940)

These sentiments spread from the very top down through the ranks of the Red Army and the Party. Lieutenant-General S. Krivoshein described a conversation he had with Peter Latyshev, his deputy. Krivoshein was commanding the 25th Mechanized Corps at the time. Shortly before, he had been in charge, along with

General Guderian, of the joint Nazi-Soviet parade in Brest-Litovsk to mark the partition of Poland. 'We have concluded a treaty with the Germans', he said, 'but this means nothing. Now is the most wonderful time to solve all world problems once and for all, and in a constructive way.' (*Ratnaya ByV*, Molodaya Gvardiya, 1962, p. 8) Krivoshein turned everything into a joke after the event. It is interesting that jokes of this kind were circulating in his Corps and indeed throughout the Red Army. Nobody seriously discussed whether the Corps and the entire Red Army had been prepared for defence.

Leonid Brezhnev himself has spoken of the way in which Soviet communists believed in the Non-Aggression Pact and the manner in which they intended to observe it. He described a meeting of Party agitators which was held in Dnepropetrovsk in 1940:

'Comrade Brezhnev, we have to interpret non-aggression and say that it has to be taken seriously, and that anyone who does not believe in it is talking provocation. But people have little faith in it. So what are we to do? Do we go on interpreting it or not?'

It was quite a delicate moment. There were 400 people sitting in the hall, all waiting for me to answer. I had very little time to think.

'You have got to go on interpreting it,' I said, 'and we shall go on interpreting it until not one stone of Nazi Germany remains upon another.' (Leonid Brezhnev, *Malaya Zemlya*, Moscow, 1978, p. 16)

It occurred to Stalin that the situation in which 'not one stone of Nazi Germany remains upon another' would come about in 1942. But the rapid fall of France and Hitler's refusal to land in Britain (Soviet military intelligence knew about this at the end of 1940) rearranged all the cards which Stalin held in his hand. The liberation of Europe was brought forward from the summer of 1942 to the summer of 1941. The new year of 1941 was therefore greeted with the slogan, 'Let us increase the numbers of republics in the Soviet Union!'

Wielding our spades, in Forty-One, we'll find
The wealth of Earth, which lies in virgin layers;
Uranium, by cyclatron enlivened,

Becomes a simple fuel for every day.
Each year for us is victory, a battle,
For coal, for sweeps of metallurgy galore,
To sixteen coats of arms, perhaps, are added,
New coats of arms-of these will have still more . . .
(*Pravda*, 1 January 1941)

They were not thinking about defence. They were not preparing for it, nor had they any intention of preparing for it. They were fully aware that Germany was already at war in the West and for that reason would not begin a war in the East. They knew full well that war on two fronts would be suicide for Hitler.

On no occasion before the war did *Pravda* ever call on the Soviet people to strengthen its *defences*. Indeed, *Pravda's* tone was quite different:

Our country is large; the globe must revolve for nine hours before the whole of our vast Soviet land can enter the new year of our victories. The time will come when not nine hours, but all the twenty-four hours on the clock will be needed for this to happen . . . Who knows where we shall be greeting the new year in five or ten years' time - in what latitude, on what new Soviet meridian? (*Pravda*, 1 January 1941)

The nearer the date of the Soviet invasion of Europe approached - July 1941 - the more explicit *Pravda* became:

Divide our enemies, meet the demands of each of them temporarily and then destroy them one at a time, giving them no opportunity to unite. (*Pravda*, 4 March 1941)

Hitler decided that it was not worth his while waiting any longer. He was the first to go, without waiting for the blow of the 'liberating' dagger to stab him in the back. He had begun the war in the most favourable

conditions which could possibly have existed for an aggressor; but given the nature of Stalin's grand plan, he could never have won it. Even in the most unfavourable conditions, the Red Army was able to 'liberate' half of Europe and has held it in subjugation to this day. We must wonder how would it have turned out had the best German forces left the Continent in the early stages of the war to go off to Africa and the British Isles, leaving the Red Army to move in behind their backs to destroy Germany's only source of oil.

CHAPTER 6

When Did the Soviet Union Enter World War II?

*In the event of a general conflict, only one country
can win. That country is the Soviet Union.*

HITLER, 1937 (In conversation
with Lord Halifax, Obersalzberg,
19 November 1937)

Everything in the Soviet Union relating to the beginning of World War II is concealed by the impenetrable darkness of state secrecy. Among the many secrets is one which is especially well kept: the date on which the Soviet Union entered the war.

In order to conceal the truth, communist propaganda has put about the false date of 22 June 1941. Communist writers have thought up a multitude of legends about 22 June. I have even heard it said that the USSR was bent on a 'peaceful' life when it was set upon. If the inventions of Soviet propaganda are to be believed, the Soviet Union did not enter World War II of its own volition, but was forcibly dragged into it.

In order to make this sound plausible, Soviet propaganda has been compelled to buttress this date with special props. On the one hand, the 'pre-war period' was devised to include the two years preceding 22 June, while on the other, we have the invented figure of '1,418 days of war'. Counting back from the day when the war in Europe ended, one inevitably comes to rest, according to forged Soviet computations, on 'that fateful Sunday'.

It is, however, easy to debunk the myth of 22 June. All that is needed to do this is to tap gently on one of the supports, that of the 'pre-war period', for example, for the entire structure to collapse, along with that 'fateful' date and the 1,418 days of the 'great motherland war'.

The 'pre-war period' never existed. It was invented. Suffice it to recall that during this period all the European neighbours of the Soviet Union fell victims to Soviet aggression. Moreover, the Red Army certainly had no intention of restricting or stopping its 'liberation campaigns' into the West at that point (Order No.

400, dated 7 February 1940, of the People's Commissar for the Defence of the USSR) although by then only Germany lay to the west of the Soviet Union.

In September 1939, the Soviet Union declared itself neutral and, during the 'pre-war period', seized territories with populations totalling 23 million people - not bad going for a neutral state.

The Red Army and the NKVD perpetrated fearful crimes in these captured territories. Soviet concentration camps were crammed with imprisoned soldiers and officers from a number of European countries. Officer prisoners, and not only the Poles, were shot in their thousands. This is not the action of a neutral state.

Here is a strange state of affairs. Germany attacked Poland, which means that Germany was the instigator of, and participant in, the European and then the World War. The Soviet Union did the same thing in the same month, but it does not judge itself to have been an instigator of the war. Nor does it consider itself even to have then been a participant in the war.

A Polish soldier killed in battle on Polish territory against the Red Army is considered a participant in World War II, as well as its victim, while the Soviet soldier who killed him is regarded as 'neutral'. If in the same battle a Soviet soldier is killed, then it is judged that he has been killed not in wartime but in peacetime -in the 'pre-war period'.

Germany seized Denmark and this was an act of war, even although no great battles were fought. The Soviet Union also seized, without firing a shot, three Baltic states markedly similar to Denmark in geographical position, in size of population, in culture and in traditions. But the actions of the Soviet Union are not judged to be acts of war.

Germany seized Norway. This was a further act of aggression. But before this happened, the Soviet Union had carved up neighbouring Finland. The list of crimes committed by Germany in the war begins on 1 September 1939, while the list of the Red Army's crimes begins for some reason only on 22 June 1941. Why?

During the 'pre-war period', the Red Army lost hundreds of thousands of its soldiers in bitter battles. German Army losses in the same period were considerably less. If one judges from losses alone, Germany had more grounds than the Soviet Union for considering itself neutral in 1939 and 1940.

The official formula used to give a name to these actions of the Soviet Army in the 'pre-war period' is 'strengthening of western frontier security'. This is not true. The frontiers were secure, at a time when the neighbours of the Soviet Union were the neutral states of Europe, while there were no common frontiers with Germany, and when Hitler in consequence was totally unable to launch a general attack, and certainly not a surprise attack, on the Soviet Union. Stalin, however, systematically destroyed several neutral states of Europe, thereby establishing a common frontier with Germany. This was not a way of enhancing the security of the Soviet frontiers.

If we use the formula 'strengthening of western frontier security' to describe aggression against six neutral European states — Poland, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Romania - why do we not use the same formula in relation to Hitler? Did he not enhance the security of his frontiers by occupying neighbouring countries?

It might be objected that in the 'pre-war period' the Soviet Union did not wage one continuous war, but a series of wars and invasions separated by intervals. But Hitler also waged a series of wars separated by intervals. Why do we use other criteria when judging him?

It is alleged that the Soviet Union did not formally declare war on anybody in the 'pre-war period', therefore it cannot be considered a participant in the war. But Hitler did not always formally declare war. According to the statements made by Soviet propaganda, nobody formally declared war on anybody on 22 June 1941 either. So why is this date accepted as the divide between war and peace?

Soviet propaganda begins its history of the war from the moment when foreign troops appeared on Soviet territory and thus presents the Soviet Union as an innocent victim. Let us stop imagining it as an innocent victim. Let us remember instead those who were really innocent, and who perished in the 'prewar period' on the bayonets of the army of 'liberators'. Let the history of the war be written, not from 22 June, but from the moment when the communist hordes, without any declaration of war, took belligerent action in an already weakened Poland, whose army was trying in a heroic but unequal struggle to stop Hitler's drive to the east. Let the history of the war be written, not just from that day, but from the day on which Stalin himself took the decision to start it.

At dawn on 1 September 1939, the German Army entered Poland. In the twentieth century, war in Europe automatically means world war. So the war in fact quickly laid hold upon both Europe and almost the whole of the rest of the world.

By a strange confluence of circumstances, it was precisely on that very same day of 1 September that the Fourth Extraordinary Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR passed a law establishing general liability for military service. Throughout the whole of the Soviet Union's history, there had never been such a law. While Hitler was frightening children (and grown-ups), and was looked upon as a monster and an ogre, the Soviet government had in fact got by without any general military-service liability law. Yet as soon as the Non-Aggression Pact was signed, an act was needed to establish a general obligation to perform military service. September 1939 was the beginning of the phoney war in the West. In the same month, a no less phoney peace began in the East.

Why did the Soviet Union need to impose the general obligation to military service? The communists will answer with one voice that it was needed because the Second World War began that day; they did not want to take part in it, but were simply taking precautionary measures. Marshal of the Soviet Union, K. A. Meretskov, was one of the many who asserted that the law was of great significance and was passed 'in the conditions of World War II which had already begun'. (*Na Sluzhbe Narodu*, IPL, Moscow, 1968 p. 181)

Let us imagine the Polish-German frontier on that tragic morning - darkness, mist, shooting and the roar of engines. There were few in Poland who understood what was happening, whether it was a provocation or an unauthorized clash which had somehow been self-generated. But at the same moment, the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR - including shepherds from the mountainous pastures high above the cloud level and distinguished reindeer breeders from nomad camps in the Arctic - were assembled in Moscow. *They* already knew that it was neither provocation, nor a clash, nor a Polish-German war, nor even a European war, but the beginning of the Second World War; and they immediately met in emergency session to pass the appropriate laws. Yet how can it be explained why these same deputies did not react with identical swiftness when a similar thing happened on the Soviet-German frontier in 1941?

On that morning of 1 September, it was not only the Polish government and the governments of western countries who did not know that a new world war had begun. Hitler himself did not know it. He began the war against Poland in the hope that it would only be a local action, like the seizure of Czechoslovakia had been. This is not just Goebbels' propaganda. Soviet sources say the same thing: 'Hitler was convinced,' wrote Air Colonel-General A. S. Yakovlev, who was a personal adviser of Stalin's at the time, 'that Britain and France would not go to war over Poland.' (*Tsel' Zhizni*, IPL, Moscow, 1968, p. 212)

Thus Hitler did not know that he was beginning World War II; the comrades in the Kremlin knew it all too well. But it is, of course, a long -way to Moscow. Some deputies needed a week, others as much as twelve days to reach the capital. This means that, in order to discuss the war which had begun in Europe, someone gave the signal to the deputies to gather in the Kremlin *before the war began*. Indeed, I believe that someone gave this signal *even before the Molotov—Ribbentrop pact was signed*.

An attempt to establish the *exact* date on which the Second World War began, and the time when the Soviet Union came into it, inescapably leads us, in fact, to the date of 19 August 1939.

Previously, Stalin had often spoken at secret meetings about his plan to 'liberate' Europe. This was first to involve Europe in war, while he himself remained neutral. Then, when the adversaries had exhausted each other, he would throw the whole power of the Red Army into the balance. (Stalin, Vol. 6, p. 158; Vol. 7, p. 14) The final decision to carry this plan in effect was taken at a session of the Politburo held on 19 August 1939. News about this Politburo meeting and what it had decided reached the Western press immediately. Havas, the French news agency, published a report on the proceedings. Yet how could a record of them fall into the hands of the Western press?

There is no sure answer. It *might* have passed along one of several paths. One of the more probable is this: one or more Politburo members, frightened by Stalin's plans, decided to stop him. They could not protest openly. The only way, therefore, of compelling Stalin to renounce his plans might have been to publish his plans in the West. Members of the Politburo, especially those who controlled the Red Army, the war industry, military intelligence, the NKVD, propaganda and the Comintern, were perfectly able to do it.

Such a scenario is not as fantastic as it might first appear. Zinoviev and Kamenev, who were, in 1917, members of the Politburo, published the plans of Lenin and Trotsky in the bourgeois press in order to disrupt

the October Coup. We still do not know how the document found its way to the West, but there were a variety of ways it could have got there.

Stalin reacted to the Havas agency message with lightning speed and in a highly unusual manner. He published a denial in *Pravda*. It is a serious document and must be read in full:

THE FALSE REPORT ISSUED BY THE HAVAS AGENCY

The editor of *Pravda* has put the following question to Comrade Stalin. What is Comrade Stalin's attitude to the message issued by the Havas agency on 'Stalin's speech', allegedly made by him 'in the Politburo of 19 August', at which ideas were supposedly advanced to the effect that 'the war must be continued for as long as is needed to exhaust the belligerent countries'?

Comrade Stalin has sent the following answer:

'This report issued by the Havas agency, like many more of its messages, is nonsense. I of course cannot know in precisely which nightclub these lies were fabricated. But no matter how many lies the gentlemen of the Havas agency might tell, they cannot deny that

- a) it was not Germany which attacked France and Britain, but France and Britain which attacked Germany, thereby taking upon themselves the responsibility for the present war;
- b) after hostilities began, Germany made peace proposals to France and Britain, while the Soviet Union openly supported these German peace proposals, for it considered, and continues to consider, that only as early an end to the war as possible can bring relief in a fundamental way to the condition of all countries and all peoples;
- c) the ruling circles in Britain and France rejected out of hand both the German peace proposals and the Soviet Union's efforts to end the war as quickly as possible.

Such are the facts. What can the nightclub politicians of the Havas agency provide to counter these facts?' J. STALIN (*Pravda*, 30 November 1939)

Let the reader make up his own mind as to whether the Havas agency report or Stalin's denial is nonsense. Stalin himself, in my view, would hardly have wished to repeat this in his own words in a subsequent period. It is interesting to note that copies of the Pravda issue of 30 November 1939 practically no longer exist in the Soviet Union. I was astonished to discover that there was no copy to be found in the special repository of the GRU archives. It had long since been destroyed. I succeeded in finding a copy only in the West.

The unconcealed mendacity of Stalin's refutation, and his uncharacteristic loss of composure, support the Havas agency version. In this case a nerve of unusual sensitivity was touched and this is why there was such a response to it. During the decades of Soviet power, the Western press wrote a great deal about the Soviet Union and Stalin personally. The Bolsheviki and Stalin himself were accused of every mortal sin. It wrote that Stalin had been an *agent provocateur* for the police, that he had murdered his wife, that he was a despot, a sadist, a dictator, an ogre, a butcher and much more besides. But not once did Stalin become involved in controversy with the 'bourgeois hack writers'. Why then, on only this one occasion, did the normally taciturn and composed Stalin lower himself to indulge in cheap insults? There can only be one answer. The Havas agency had revealed some of Stalin's best-kept secrets. It did not matter to him what future generations might think about his refutation. (They do not, incidentally, think anything of it at all.) What was important to Stalin at that particular moment was that he should keep his plan secret for the next two or three years until the countries of Europe had become weak through involving themselves in a mutually destructive war.

If we are to accept Stalin's arguments and if the Havas agency report did simply consist of lies 'fabricated' in a 'nightclub', we must express our admiration for the Havas agency journalists. If they really did invent their report, then they did so on the basis of a deep knowledge of Marxism-Leninism, of Stalin's character, and of a detailed, scientific analysis of the military and political situation in Europe; indeed, they understood the situation far better than Hitler and the leaders of the Western democracies. If the report *was* invented, then this was an occasion when an invention corresponded entirely to the facts.

Many years later, when the Havas agency report and Stalin's refutation of it had long been forgotten, thirteen volumes of Stalin's essays were published in the Soviet Union. These works include his speeches made at secret sessions of the Central Committee. In 1939 the Havas agency journalists did not have any access to these speeches. But the publication of Stalin's works confirmed that Stalin's plan was simple and one of genius, and that it was exactly as the French journalists had described it. As early as 1927, Stalin

expressed the view at a closed session of the Central Committee that in the event of war it would be essential to remain neutral until the 'warring sides have exhausted each other in a mutual conflict which is beyond their strength to sustain'. This view was often repeated subsequently at closed sessions. Stalin considered that in the event of a war breaking out in Europe, the Soviet Union had to become a participant in it, but it must be the last to enter, right at the end of the game in which the adversary had already been weakened to the point of exhaustion.

Although they both had different attitudes towards Stalin, two of his successors, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, interestingly both confirmed that it had been Stalin's intention to exhaust Europe in war, while preserving his own neutrality, and *then* to 'liberate' it. Stalin's predecessors said the same thing. When he was laying the foundations of his plan in the narrow circle of his comrades in arms, Stalin simply quoted Lenin and emphasized that it was Lenin's idea. But Lenin had not been original either. He in his turn scooped his ideas from the inexhaustible supply of ideas provided by Marx. There is an interesting letter written by Friedrich Engels on 12 June 1883 to Edouard Bernstein: 'All these layabouts of various kinds,' he wrote, 'must first of all fight like dogs among themselves, destroy and compromise each other, and in that way they will be preparing the ground for us.'

Stalin differed from both his predecessors and successors in that he spoke less than they, but acted more.

It would be very important to know, were it possible, what Stalin actually said in the Politburo meeting of 19 August 1939. Even although we cannot know the words he spoke, we see his actions and these show far more clearly what he had in mind. It was only four days after this meeting that the Molotov— Ribbentrop pact was signed in the Kremlin. The most outstanding achievement ever attained by Soviet diplomacy, it was Stalin's most brilliant victory in his extraordinary career. 'I have deceived him. I have deceived Hitler,' cried Stalin joyfully after the Pact had been signed. (Nikita Khrushchev, *Memoirs*, Chasidze Publications, 1981) Stalin had indeed deceived Hitler in a way that nobody had deceived anyone else throughout the whole of the twentieth century. Only a week and a half after the Pact had been signed Hitler had a war on two fronts. That is to say, from the very outset of hostilities Germany fell into a situation in which it could only lose the war; or, to put it

another way, on 23 August 1939, the day the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact was signed, Stalin had won the Second World War even before Hitler came into it.

It was only in the summer of 1940 that Hitler realized that he had been taken in. He tried to take on Stalin again, but it was too late. Hitler could hope for brilliant tactical victories only, but Germany's strategic position was catastrophic. Germany again found itself between two millstones. On the one side there was Britain on her inaccessible island, with the United States behind her. On the other side was Stalin. Hitler turned his face to the west, realizing that Stalin was quite clearly preparing an attack and that he could cut Germany's oil artery in Romania at one blow, paralysing the whole of German industry, and the entire German Army, Air Force and Navy. Turning his face to the east, Hitler first got strategic air raids and then invasion from the west.

It is said that Stalin won only thanks to the help and cooperation given by Britain and the United States, and herein lay his greatness; while being the West's most virulent enemy, Stalin knew how to use it in order to protect and reinforce his own dictatorship. Stalin's genius, as we've seen, lay in knowing how to divide his adversaries and then knock their heads together. Even in 1939, the free press in the West was already sounding a warning about such a course of events, when Stalin was playing a game of neutrality in words whilst, in deed, playing a very much more dangerous one.

CHAPTER 7

'Extending the Foundations of War'

*The national liberation of Germany lies in
the proletarian revolution seizing Central and Western
Europe, and uniting it with Eastern Europe in
the form of the Soviet United States.*

TROTSKY (BO, No. 24, p. 9)

After Napoleon had been expelled from Russia, the victorious Russian Army entered Paris. Not finding Napoleon there, the Russian Army went home, singing songs on its way. For Russia the aim of the war had been to rout the armies of the enemy. If no one else was threatening Moscow, then the Russian Army had nothing further to do in Western Europe.

The difference between Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union lies in their respective war aims. In 1923 Mikhail Tukhachevsky, who had already gained renown for his monstrous brutality in mass exterminations in central Russia, northern Caucasus, the Urals, Siberia and Poland, was formulating the theoretical basis for the aim of war. According to Tukhachevsky, the aim of war was 'to guarantee for oneself the free use of violence and for this purpose it is necessary in the first instance to wipe out the forces of the enemy'. (*Revolyutsia i voina*, Moscow 1923, *Collected Works* No. 22, p. 188) The rout of the enemy armies and their general destruction do not mark the end of war and coercion, but only the creation of conditions for 'the free use of violence'. 'Every territory occupied by us becomes Soviet territory after its occupation, where the power of the workers and peasants will be established.' (Marshal of the Soviet Union M. Tukhachev-sky, *Izbrannye Proizvedeniya*, Moscow Voenizdat 1964, Vol. I, p. 258)

In his work, *Questions of Modern Strategy*, Tukhachevsky draws attention to the fact that Soviet military staff must give timely instructions to the political administration and other appropriate agencies to prepare revolutionary committees and other local administrative machinery for these or other regions'. (*op. cit.*, p. 196) In other words, Soviet military staff were to prepare 'liberation' operations in great secrecy, but while they

were doing this they were also to alert the political commissars and the 'appropriate agencies' that they should prepare in good time the communist administrative machinery for the 'liberated' regions. The Red Army would bring freedom to its neighbours on its bayonets, along with ready-made organs of local authority.

To this process of Sovietizing all seized territories as rapidly as possible by methods of unrestrained coercion and terror, together with the barbaric exploitation of all resources needed to continue aggression, Tukhachevsky gave a 'scientific' name: he called it 'extension of the basis of war'. Tukhachevsky even inserted this term into the Great Soviet Encyclopedia. (*Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya*, Moscow 1928, Vol. 12, pp. 276-277)

In a speech on 30 March 1941, Adolf Hitler proclaimed to his generals what the objective of the war in the East was to be. It was to defeat the enemy armed forces, to wipe out the communist dictatorship, to establish 'real socialism' and to make out of Russia a base for continuing the war. Were Tukhachevsky's aims any different? Was he not promulgating the same ideas in 1923?

When he was preparing a military operation, Hitler took care to set up administrative machinery for new territories even before they had been invaded; Tukhachevsky too proposed to do exactly the same thing.

Tukhachevsky would have made a good *Gauleiter*, but he was no strategist. A scrutiny of his 'battering-ram' strategy reveals its complete lack of substance. It is the method adopted by a chessplayer who concentrates his attention on destroying all his opponent's pieces *en masse*, beginning with the pawns. Carried away by his theory, Tukhachevsky quickly and inevitably found himself without reserves in any serious clash. His defeat on the Vistula certainly did not happen by chance. All his life he tried, with dim-witted obstinacy, to improve his method, fallacious in principle, by using a theoretical base to shore up his ignorance. Communist historians assure us that, once he had liquidated Tukhachevsky, Stalin completely rejected his methods. This was not the case. Stalin only spurned Tukhachevsky's unacceptable strategic method, which was known to lead to defeat, but he retained his ideas about 'the extension of the basis of war' and allowed others to develop them further.

Apart from Tukhachevsky and others like him, Stalin did have real strategists. The first and most brilliant of these was undoubtedly Vladimir Triandafillov, the father of operational art.⁶ It was in 1926 that, in a book entitled *Range of Operations in Modern Armies*, he expounded the first approximate formulation of the 'operations in depth' theory. Triandafillov developed his ideas further in a subsequent book entitled *Character of Operations in Modern Armies*. Even today these books remain the foundation of the Soviet art of war. Triandafillov found people who understood his strategic ideas, which were truly ones of genius, and promoted them to the General Staff. Among these was A. M. Vasilevsky, the future marshal of the Soviet Union. G. K. Zhukov put Triandafillov's ideas into practice in all his operations, beginning with Khalkhin-Gol.

Triandafillov understandably could not easily relate to Tukhachevsky, even although Tukhachevsky was his immediate superior. Triandafillov was not afraid of Tukhachevsky and he exposed the poverty of the 'battering-ram' strategy by showing that a good chessplayer must not devote all his attention to destroying pawns. The good chessplayer delivers a blow 'in depth', thereby rendering his opponent's pawns useless. A good chessplayer will create a threat not in one but in at least two sectors, thereby compelling his opponent to divide his attention and reserves, while the player himself strikes a blow at another sector, where his opponent has no reserves at all.

When he rejected Tukhachevsky's military method, Triandafillov fully accepted and developed his theory on forcible and rapid Sovietization of 'liberated' territories; 'the Sovietization of entire states must be dealt with within a short period of two to three weeks. Where larger countries are concerned, Sovietization of very large areas must be managed in three to four weeks . . . When organizing revolutionary committees, it will be very difficult to count on local forces. Only a part of the technical apparatus and only the more junior executive officials will be available on the spot. All executive officials and even some of the technical personnel will have to be brought in along with the Army . . . The number of such officials needed to carry on Sovietization in recaptured areas will be enormous.' (*Kharakter Operatsii Sovremennykh Armii*, V. K. Triandafillov, Moscow 1929, pp. 177-8)

Triandafillov drew attention to the fact that it would be mistaken to divert Red Army fighting units to tasks of 'Sovietization'. It would be no bad thing to have special units for this. The Red Army does battle with the

⁶ Until the early twentieth century, all military art was divided into two levels: strategy and tactics. Soviet military thinking then developed an intermediate level and called it 'operational art'. Half a century later, Western military thinkers now accept this term.

enemy and inflicts defeat upon him, while these special units go to work in the rear establishing power, and a happy life for the workers and peasants. Hitler latterly took the same viewpoint. The Wehrmacht would crush the enemy, while the S S would set up the New Order. Of course, in critical situations — and war consists of these — the Wehrmacht divisions were thrown into the battle to suppress the partisan movement, while the SS divisions were thrown into tank battles on the forward edge of the battle area. That, however, was not what either the Wehrmacht or the SS was built for.

Triandafilov understood the art of war in terms of the exact sciences, in which by means of mathematical calculation he worked out simple formulae for offensive operations involving armies of millions operating in great depth. The formulae covered every stage of an offensive. They even included a calculation as to how many Soviet political leaders would be needed for every administrative unit in captured territories. They are formulae as sharp and elegant as any geometric theorem.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact opened the gates to Sovietization. Stalin had everything ready and not only in theory. Soviet staff had worked out operations in great secrecy, but they did not neglect to give instructions to the political commissars and the 'appropriate organs' that they be fully prepared for Sovietization.

On the night of 16-17 September 1939 I. A. Bogdanov, a brigade commander in the NKVD, issued an order to the Chekists in which he said that 'at dawn on 17 September 1939, the armies of the Byelorussian Front will go over to the offensive. Their task will be to help the workers and peasants of Byelorussia who have risen in rebellion.' Thus the revolution in Poland had begun; the workers and peasants would be up to dealing with it themselves, while the Red Army and the NKVD would only render them assistance. The results are well known. The massacre of Polish officers at Katyn also comes into this category of assistance'.

Stalin was not afraid of Hitler, as the communists try to make it appear. If Stalin had feared Hitler, he would have kept the Polish officers safe and, when the German invasion took place, thrown them into battle at the head of tens of thousands of troops to fight as partisans on Polish soil. Defence against Hitler, however, did not enter into Stalin's plans. Stalin not only did not use this Polish potential, he even dissolved his own partisan detachments which had been formed earlier to be used in the event of war.

The Sovietization of Finland was prepared in even greater detail. At the very moment when 'the Finnish militarists began their armed provocations', Stalin already had up his sleeve a Finnish communist 'president', a 'prime minister' and an entire 'government', including a leading Chekist, for a 'free democratic Finland'. 'People's representatives' also turned up in Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Bessarabia and in Bukovina, all demanding that these countries be annexed to the 'fraternal family of nations'. Chairmen of revolutionary committees, people's jurors, deputies and many more were all found with surprising speed.

Sovietization thus gathered strength, while Stalin added to his reserves of Party administrators for new campaigns. On 13 March 1940, the Politburo took a decision to entrust the People's Commissariat for Defence with the practical task of grading the entire *nomenklatura*, or governing establishment of the Party, and of giving them military ranks. The entire Party changed from being semi-military into a purely military one. 'Officials of Party committees,' it was decided, 'would be obliged systematically to undergo military retraining so that, whenever they might be called into the RKKA [*Rabache-Krest' yanskaya Krasnaya Armiya* - the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army] or the RKKF [*Rabache-Krest'yanskii Krasny Plot* - the Workers' and Peasants' Red Navy], they would be able to devote themselves to duties appropriate to their qualifications.' (Politburo Decree, dated 13 March 1940, 'Military Retraining and Regrading of Party Committee Officials and the Procedure to be Followed on their Mobilization into the RKKA') The words, 'devote themselves to duties appropriate to their qualifications', are of particular interest. What qualification does a big shot in the Party have, apart from being qualified to act as secretary of a Party regional committee? Yet here we had plans being made to use them as secretaries of regional committees (and town committees and district committees), even after they had been called up to the Army.

From May 1940 until February 1941, 99,000 political workers in the reserve, who included '63,000 senior workers of Party committees', were regraded, that is they had to sit examinations and appear before boards. The retraining of the Party establishment went ahead at an intensified pace. And retraining was not all. On 17 June 1941 another decree was issued. Yet another 3,700 of the Party *nomenklatura* received orders to place themselves at the Army's disposal. Were preparations under way for a new Sovietization?

Not only did the Party bosses Sovietize the Baltic states, the western Ukraine, western Byelorussia, Bessarabia and Bukovina, but they also had a hand in the 'appropriate organs'. Working behind the backs of the 'people's representatives' and the 'servants of the people', the NKVD assisted the workers and peasants, who had risen in rebellion 'to reinforce the power of the proletariat', as it is put in Soviet propaganda parlance.

The frontier guards of the NKVD were the first to cross the borders. 'Operating in small groups, they seized and held river crossings and road junctions.' (*VIZH** 1970, No. 7, p. 85) In the 1939-40 Winter War against Finland, a detachment of NKVD frontier guards infiltrated secretly into Finnish territory, made a dash through the tundra and, in a surprise attack, seized the town of Petsamo and its harbour. In the war with Japan some five years later, using frontier guards, '320 assault detachments were formed, each consisting of between 30 and 75 men armed with machine guns, sub-machine guns, rifles and grenades. Separate detachments had a strength of between 100 and 150 men . . . The training which was carried out was based upon previously worked out and precisely defined plans of surprise attack . . . The surprise element in the operations was to play a paramount role in the attainment of success.' (*VIZH*⁷ 1965, No. 8, p. 12)

The NKVD frontier troops operated in exactly the same way in the war with Germany. In those places where German troops had not crossed the border, Soviet frontier troops went over it on their own initiative. They had been prepared. An example of this method of operating occurred on 26 June 1941. Soviet frontier motor-launches made a landing in the area of the town of Kiliya on the Romanian frontier. The landing established a bridgehead, on which the members of the assault landing-force gave fire support to the members of the NKVD reconnaissance patrol who had preceded them with a landing on the bank. (*Chasovye Sovetskikh granits*, Moscow 1983; p. 141) Interestingly ; at the time of the *German attack* these elite and highly trained NKVD troops, stationed on bridges at the frontier, had made no preparations either to repel an attack or defend the bridges. They yielded them to the enemy almost without a fight. When they had to capture the western part of a frontier bridge, however, these frontier troops revealed excellent training, and displayed both courage and bravery, all in the spirit of the Romanian assault described above. When they had to defend the eastern part of the bridge, these same soldiers showed a total *lack* of preparedness. It was simply that no one had trained them to do this. No one had ever put them through any defensive exercises.

⁷ An official military-historical magazine from the Ministry of Defence.

In 1940, the volume of NKVD operations exceeded that of 1944 and 1945, and of many subsequent years. 1940 was, of course, the year of Katyn. Polish officers were also exterminated in at least two other places, where the victims were no fewer than in Katyn. Lithuanian officers were exterminated at the same time, as were Latvian and Estonian officers; and not only officers. There were teachers, priests, policemen, writers, lawyers, journalists, peasants, entrepreneurs and people from all strata of society, exactly as in the Red Terror against the Russian people. The scale of the NKVD operations grew; but suddenly something changed. From February 1941, the NKVD's military sub-units covertly began a secret build-up near the state frontiers.

The chief strength of the NKVD, however, did not lie in its frontier troops. Apart from them, the NKVD consisted of a great number of regiments and divisions of operational, convoy and security troops. All of these worked very hard at destroying 'hostile elements' and at 'purging the territory'. In the Soviet -Finnish war of 1939-40, there were eight NKVD regiments engaged in this activity, as well as individual battalions, companies and formations of frontier troops. An operation carried out in 1944 in the rear of the Byelorussian Front may serve to illustrate the scale of these 'purges' of the area behind the front. Five NKVD frontier regiments, seven NKVD regiments of operational troops, four cavalry regiments, detached battalions and reconnaissance aircraft all took part in the operation. The total strength involved was 50,000 troops. The area covered was 30,000 square kilometres. (*Ibid*,p. 181) The NKVD operated on no less a scale even before Hitler attacked, though information on operations carried out in 1940 in the Baltic states, the western Ukraine, Byelorussia, Bukovina and Bessarabia has never been published.

Communist professors are now doing their best to play down the Red Army's power at the outset of World War II, and to overstate the strength of the Wehrmacht. This is done by manipulating statistics; while they take into account all divisions of the Wehrmacht and the SS in Germany, in the Soviet Union only the divisions of the Red Army are counted. The elite, highly trained, fully equipped and armed NKVD divisions, however, are conveniently left out of the calculation. The communists have proclaimed that 47 ground and six naval

frontier detachments, each with a complement of about one regiment, and n regiments of NKVD operational troops, totalling about 100,000 men, were stationed close to the frontiers. This is the truth. But not all the truth. When the Germans invaded, not only NKVD regiments, but separate NKVD battalions of impressive strength, as well as entire NKVD divisions, were stationed directly on the frontiers. For example, the 4th NKVD Division, commanded by Colonel F. M. Mazharin, was on the Romanian frontier, while sub-units of the 57th NKVD Regiment of this division were stationed directly at frontier bridges. The 8th NKVD Motor Rifle Division was close to the frontier. The 10th NKVD Division was in the Rava-Russkaya region, while the 16th NKVD Cavalry Regiment, which formed part of this division, was directly dispersed among posts along the frontier. The 21st NKVD Motor Rifle Division was on the Finnish frontier. The 1st NKVD Division, commanded by Colonel S. I. Donskov, was there as well. The 22nd NKVD Motor Rifle Division first appears in German operational summaries on the seventh day of the invasion of Lithuania.

Some of these NKVD units were incredibly close to the borders; sometimes literally only a few metres away from the frontier itself. For example, the 132nd NKVD Independent Battalion was in the Tiraspol fortification of the Brest-Litovsk fortress, though not for defensive purposes; the fortress had not been prepared for war. It had been intended, in the event of war, to leave only one infantry battalion there with ordinary troops. Sitting alongside, in the same barracks, for defensive purposes was the Fifth Frontier Detachment (a regiment); the 132nd NKVD Battalion was not in fact a frontier battalion at all, but a *convoy* battalion. This had been used to deport 'enemies' from western Byelorussia and here it was now stationed on the western bank of the river Bug. The battalion was doing nothing for the time being. It was a long, hard road back to the Soviet Union. First the river Bug had to be crossed to the old citadel in the boats of the Chekist officials. Then there was a multitude of gates to pass through, and minor bridges and ditches to cross. Next came the river Mukhavets, but once over that, there were even more ditches, banks and barriers. There were no enemies in the fortress and it was therefore a long way to town, so the battalion was resting - for the time being. In the other direction was the Tiraspol fortification, a fortress island on Polish territory, or rather, to be more exact, on German, as it was no longer part of Poland. And all the battalion had to do to reach German territory was to cross a small bridge.

On a wall in the barracks of the 132nd Independent Battalion someone wrote an inscription: 'I am dying, but I shall not surrender. Farewell, Motherland! 20. VII. 1941.' These 'heroes' had good reason not to

surrender. The SS would have already worked out who the Cheka officials intended to deport from the other side of the state frontier.

I found, as we have seen, NKVD convoy battalions and regiments, and indeed convoy divisions, right on the frontier. The 4th NKVD Division straddled the frontier bridges across the river Prut. Was it there perhaps to blow them up, should the situation become exacerbated? By no means. The bridges were mined. Afterwards the mines were removed and an NKVD division was placed alongside the same bridges. According to one piece of information, the 4th NKVD Division was a kind of security division: by making an analogy with the SS, the meaning of the word 'security' becomes altogether more sinister in this context. Other information, however, indicates that the 4th NKVD Division operated like a convoy division. Indeed Colonel Mazharin, who commanded the division, was an old GULAG wolf, who spent all his career in convoy work. But whom did the Gulag security intend to escort across the frontier bridges?

CHAPTER 8

Why Howitzer Artillery for the Chekists?

We shall destroy the beast in his lair.

L. BERIA

(Commissar General for
State Security, People's
Commissar for Internal
Affairs, February 1941)

The communist punitive machine had two principal mechanisms, the organs and the troops. What is understood here by 'troops' is not, of course, Red Army troops, but special formations of the VChK (*Vserossiiskaya Chrezvychainaya Komissiya* -the All-Russian Special Commission, or Cheka), the OGPU (*Ob'edinennoe Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie*) and the NKVD.

While the Red Army fought on external fronts, these special divisions waged war on internal fronts. At the time when the communist dictatorship was being established, the punitive troops played an incomparably more important role than the punitive organs. Equipped with armoured cars, armoured trains, three-inch cannon and machine guns, they waged a real war against their own people.

In 1923, the Chief Directorate was set up to co-ordinate the operations carried out by all punitive troops. Although the punitive machine changed its name from time to time as easily as a snake changes its skin, the name of the Chief Directorate remained unchanged. This organization, and the troops under

its command, perpetrated fearful atrocities against the Russian and indeed all other nations who populate the Soviet Union. In the times of collectivization alone, the punitive troops exterminated millions of people, and handed over more than ten million of them to that other directorate of the NKVD, the GULAG, responsible for prisons and labour camps.

As the communist dictatorship grew in strength, the organs came to occupy an increasingly important place in relation to that held by the punitive troops. The informer's pen, the interrogator's thumbscrew and the executioner's Nagan revolver became the main weapons of terror. Of course, the numbers of the punitive troops did not grow any less, but their role became largely a secondary one, involving round-ups, searches, arrests, deportations, and the protection of punitive and 'correctional' establishments. The punitive troops also protected leaders, the national frontiers and communications. The image of the punitive fighter also changed. It was then no longer a sailor with the face of a criminal in an armoured car, but a soldier wearing a sheepskin coat, his face turned into the Arctic wind, rifle in hand and with his faithful dog at his side. The punitive soldiery no longer had armoured cars. They were no longer needed.

1937 was not, as the communists assure us, the beginning of the terror, but rather the year when it reached its peak. A year later, it had undergone a change in character, in that it had changed from being a general terror into a selective terror. It was during 1937 and 1938 that the terror even spread to the communist leaders themselves. By the time that stage had been reached, the Chekists no longer needed their machine guns. The communists, who had by then come under the blows of the axe of terror, did not offer any particular resistance.

After the Great Purge had been successfully concluded in December 1938, the terror within the country abated sharply; many prisoners were released by the GULAG, and preparations were made to release many more. In this situation, what was to happen to the troops of the NKVD and the Chief Directorate which co-ordinated their activities?

Any doubts as to whether they would in fact be abolished were quickly dispelled. The Soviet Union had embarked upon a new phase of its existence, for immediately after the Great Purge had ended and Nikolai Yezhov had been removed from power, the Chief Directorate controlling the NKVD frontier and interior troops ceased to exist under a decree issued on 2 February 1939 by the Council of People's Commissars.

On the same day, no fewer than six independent chief directorates were created inside the NKVD to take charge of the troops and deal with military matters. These were:

The Chief Directorate (GU) of NKVD
Frontier Troops

The Chief Directorate (GU) of NKVD
Security Troops
The Chief Directorate (GU) of NKVD
Convoy Troops
The Chief Directorate (GU) of NKVD
Railway Troops
The Chief Directorate (GU) of NKVD
Military Supply
The Chief Directorate (GU) of NKVD
Military Construction, given the
acronym of *Glavvoenstroï* of the NKVD.

The Soviet punitive machine then underwent a sharp change in character as the Government decided that the punitive troops should be given a position of primacy over the organs. The beginning of 1939 marked the start of a breathtaking increase in the punitive troops' power. Once again their armament included armoured trains, the latest BA-10 armoured cars, howitzers, and finally tanks and aircraft.

Punitive troops of all types and functions began to grow rapidly in numbers. The NKVD troops became so numerous that a special post had to be created to control them, and Lieutenant-General I. I. Maslennikov was appointed Deputy People's Commissar for Troops.

The strange thing, however, was that punitive troops were no longer needed on Soviet territory. There were clearly no plans for another purge in the Soviet Union in 1939, as the country had been brought to its knees and was by then totally subjected to Stalin.

The NKVD troops developed in many directions, one of which was the formation of their retreat-blocking service in 1939. The task of retreat-blocking detachments is to bolster the resolve of troops in battle, particularly an offensive battle. Having deployed behind the troops, the retreat-blocking detachment encourages the advancing soldiery with bursts of machine-gun fire directed at the backs of their heads, delays

the troops if they are retreating, returns the obedient soldiers to the battle and shoots the disobedient ones on the spot.

Such detachments had been used during the Civil War. Indeed, quite a few rascals who distinguished themselves in this field were cited in Soviet publications as 'heroes of the Civil War'. Here is a typical example: 'Vypov, I. P.—leader of a machine-gun team of the retreat-blocking detachment of the 38th Infantry Division' (*VIZH*, 1976, No. 12, p. 76) The retreat-blocking soldiers' life is not one of service, but a holiday. Enemy artillery does not worry them. They fight not against a stray enemy, but against their own demoralized men. Decorations shower upon them from the horn of plenty. Our hero has two Orders of the Red Banner.

As part of the secret build-up of Soviet forces in the country's western regions before the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed, a detached motorized infantry regiment of the NKVD became an integral part of each army. This regiment consisted not of battalions, but of retreat-blocking detachments.

Apart from the regiments which made up the armies, there were also detached NKVD motorized rifle regiments which formed part of the fronts. For example, in June 1941, there were nine regiments, an independent detachment and a detached battalion of the NKVD behind the Southern Front alone. (*VIZH*, 1983, No. 9)

In addition to NKVD motorized rifle regiments, independent retreat-blocking detachments of the NKVD were also created. These immediately became part of the corps and armies which were then being formed. One of these, for example, was the 241st Detached Retreat-Blocking Detachment, which became part of the 19th Army.

Major-General P. V. Sevast'yanov has stated that the NKVD's retreat-blocking service worked with great precision and sureness of touch. In order to perform their allotted service of stopping any retreat, the NKVD troops always took up position behind the fighting troops in every situation. 'Companies of frontier troops immediately deployed behind us' (*Volga-Neman-Dunai*, Moscow Voenizdat, 1961, p. 82) In General Sevast'yanov's words, his infantry were having to fight German troops without tanks, while the Chekists, who did have tanks, stood behind them.

We can find quite a few indications in Soviet sources which show that the NKVD's retreat-blocking service was active from the very first hours of the war, which means that it had been deployed even before the

Germans invaded. Their presence is acknowledged in Colonel-General Leonid Mikhailovich Sandalov's account of June 1941: 'I shall leave the Army retreat-blocking detachment here,' he writes. 'The Army retreat-blocking detachments were stopping them and sending them to the nearest units of the 28th Rifle Corps.' (*Perezhitoe*, Moscow, 1966)

That the NKVD's retreat-blocking service was revived before the German attack and indeed before the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact is direct evidence that the war had been decided upon in the Kremlin long before it actually began.

The NKVD expanded its operations in other directions as well. From the beginning of 1939, the strength of the NKVD frontier troops sharply increased. Since Lenin's time, the Soviet Union had had six frontier districts. Now their number increased to eighteen, while at the same time the military strength in each new district grew in relation to what it had been in the old districts. We have already had occasion to observe the aggressive tendencies of the Soviet frontier troops, which always served as the basis on which the OSNAZ (*Osobogo Naznacheniya* - special purpose) formations were set up.

In August 1939, before the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed, a rapid growth occurred in the number of NKVD OSNAZ troops. OSNAZ formations were the most aggressive strike formations in the Soviet punitive machine. In the Civil War OSNAZ units were notorious for their brutality, which was extreme even by Cheka standards. After the Civil War had ended, OSNAZ was sharply cut back so that only one NKVD OSNAZ division remained in the Moscow region. This division was under the command of NKVD Kombrig⁸ Pavel Artem'ev.

At the beginning of August 1939, G. K. Zhukov was preparing his surprise strike against the Japanese. A detached OSNAZ battalion of the NKVD numbering 502 men was placed at Zhukov's command. Although the battalion was small, it consisted of specially picked stranglers whose hands were more than accustomed to murder. The main task of this OSNAZ battalion was 'to purge that area of the rear which lay closest to the

⁸ Brigade-Commander - term used before 1940. *Kombrig* and similar terms were abandoned after 1940, and the English equivalent rankings were used.

front'. (*Chasovye Sovetskikh Granits*, IPL, Moscow 1983, p. 106) OSNAZ did its work splendidly and Zhukov was highly satisfied.

Immediately after this, the formation of OSNAZ battalions began on the Polish frontier. A dispatch from the political department of the frontier troops in the Kiev district, dated 17 September 1939, mentions that OSNAZ battalions had already been set up.

During the 'liberation' of Poland, Bessarabia, Bukovina, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland, the OSNAZ battalions were the first to cross the frontiers. Their task was first to knock out enemy frontier posts by surprise attack, and then, by operating ahead of the advancing troops, to capture bridges, cut communications, wipe out small groups of the enemy and terrorize the population. Once the Red Army units had caught up with the OSNAZ battalions, these then turned to the tasks of purging the territory and of exterminating undesirable elements. We can find mention of the NKVD's OSNAZ battalions in the same official history of the frontier troops. (Documents Nos. 185 and 193) Here are the fruits of their work: 'About 600 prisoners were escorted across the frontier; these included officers, landowners, priests, gendarmes and policemen . . .' (Document No. 196) In a contemporary version of this document this sentence comes to an abrupt halt at its semi-colon, and we are not told who were taken as 'prisoners'. A document dated 19 September 1939 describes the situation at one particular small NKVD frontier post. It was the third day of the 'liberation campaign' in Poland. This liberation is explained nowadays as a Soviet attempt to secure its borders against Hitler. Why then drive 'landowners and priests' across the frontier into the Soviet Union and declare them prisoners? These 600 prisoners formed only one drop in a very great stream which poured not simply through one frontier post, but through all of them, having begun its flow on the very first day of liberation'.

It was foreseen that, after the new frontier with Germany had been established, new usurpations would follow. Far from dissolving the previously created OSNAZ battalions of the NKVD, Stalin set up new battalions, and not only battalions. He created regiments, divisions, and even an NKVD OSNAZ corps under the command of NKVD Komdiv⁹ Shmyrev, Commissar Chumakov, and Chief of Staff NKVD Colonel

⁹ See previous page.

Vinogradov. References to this top secret corps may sometimes be found in official Soviet documents. (*Pogranichnye Voiska SSSR 1939-41*, Nauka, 1970, Document No. 39).

The movement of all types of NKVD troops towards the Soviet Union's western frontier in February 1941 cannot be explained as a defence against German invasion. Had it been so, then surely the formation of new punitive battalions, regiments and divisions should have been halted in favour of something more appropriate to defence, such as the formation of a corps of sappers to mine the entire western territory of the Soviet Union or cover it with anti-tank ditches and trenches.

But Stalin was not engaged in anything like this. Stalin needed punitive troops, not sappers. That is why one more military chief directorate was set up in the NKVD at the beginning of 1941. This time it was a purely military one, the Chief Directorate of Operational Troops of the NKVD. At its head, Stalin placed Pavel Artem'ev, an OSNAZ veteran who had commanded the 1st OSNAZ Division of the NKVD, and who had already risen to the rank of NKVD lieutenant-general.

The new chief directorate immediately set in motion a vast deployment of troops. The basic military unit was an NKVD motor-rifle division consisting of a tank regiment (or battalion), two or three motor-rifle regiments, a howitzer artillery battalion, and other sub-units. The total strength of each division was more than 10,000 Chekists.

The NKVD motor rifle divisions spread immediately to the western border of the Soviet Union. NKVD punitive divisions armed with tanks, howitzers and other heavy weapons were simply not needed on Soviet territory. Neither were they required in the territories which had recently been seized. Here the NKVD's terror machine got by without tanks, although in extreme cases they sought help from the Red Army.

The NKVD divisions were intended to be used in the rear in wartime, not in the front. That these divisions had heavy weapons indicates that it was planned to use these divisions against a strong enemy. But there was no strong enemy, nor could there be one, in the rear of the Red Army on Soviet territory.

A strong enemy could only appear in the rear of the Red Army in the event of the Red Army crossing the frontier and driving forward. Hitler did not allow this to happen. He struck the first blow, and thus rendered

all the NKVD's Soviet rifle divisions redundant. The NKVD's Chief Directorate of Operational Troops proved to be quite unnecessary in the defensive war which followed. Four days after the war had begun, Stalin moved NKVD General Artem'ev from the Chief Directorate of Operational Troops, leaving it without a leader. No more NKVD motor-rifle divisions were formed after 1941, and the existing divisions were re-formed as ordinary rifle divisions of the Red Army. The NKVD's 21 st Motor Rifle Division, for instance, under NKVD Colonel M. D. Panchenko, was changed into the 101st Rifle Division of the Red Army; the NKVD's 13th Motor Rifle Division became the 95th Rifle Division of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (and later the 75th Guards Division); and the NKVD's 8th Motor Rifle Division became the 63rd Rifle Division of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (later the 52nd Guards Division). In all, 29 divisions were transferred from the NKVD to the Red Army. (Major-General V. Nekrasov, *VIZH*, 1985, No. 9) In the defensive war that had been forced upon him, Stalin needed ordinary infantry, not punitive troops.

In 1944 the Red Army, with the NKVD in its wake, arrived in Central Europe and established workers' and peasants' power, social justice and other blessings. But even in 1939 Stalin was already setting up the machinery for establishing that happy life. Hitler simply prevented this machinery being used until 1944.

The Soviet terror machine was enormous and was intended not just for Eastern Europe but Europe in its entirety. It had to be sharply reduced in size after Hitler invaded because it no longer served any immediate purpose.

The creation of machinery with which to Sovietize Europe began before the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The Pact was signed after a final decision had been taken to establish a happy life in Europe. The Pact was only a tactical move which would allow Europe to be brought down to the levels which had existed there in 1918, thereby opening the gates to the OSNAZ formations and the motor-rifle divisions of the NKVD.

CHAPTER 9

Why the Security Zone was Dismantled on the Eve of War

*Mines are a powerful thing, but this is a resource
for the weak, for those who are defending themselves.
We do not need mines as much as we need
the means of clearing them.*
Marshal of the Soviet Union
GRIGORY IVANOVICH KULIK,
early June 1941

A country which is preparing its defence deploys its army deep inside its own territory, and not on its very frontier. The object is to prevent the enemy from destroying the main defending forces with one surprise attack. A defending side will normally build a security zone in the frontier areas in plenty of time; a zone where the terrain has been saturated with traps, engineered defences, obstacles and minefields. The defending side will deliberately avoid constructing anything related to industry or transport in this zone; nor will it keep any heavy military formations or large quantities of supplies there. On the contrary, timely preparations will have been made to blow up all bridges, tunnels and roads in this zone.

Once inside the security zone, the aggressor loses speed of movement, and his troops sustain losses before they even encounter the main forces of the defender. Only small but highly mobile detachments of the defending side operate in the security zone. These detachments spring ambushes, launch surprise attacks and then quickly withdraw to previously prepared positions. Light detachments create the impression that they are the main force, compelling the aggressor to stop, deploy his forces and waste his shells on areas where there is nothing to hit. The light detachments, meanwhile, secretly withdraw to prepare new ambushes.

While the aggressor is waging an exhausting battle with the light detachments of the covering force, the main defending forces have time to prepare themselves to confront the aggressor from positions which favour defence.

The deeper the security zone is, the better. As he breaks into a deep security zone, an aggressor involuntarily reveals the main direction of his thrust, and loses the advantage of surprise. Since he does not know how deep the security zone is, he cannot predict when he will encounter the defender's main forces; thus, the initiative has passed to the defending forces.

Throughout the centuries, and indeed the millennia, Slavonic tribes have created powerful security zones of enormous length and vast depth. Among the many defence obstacles they employed, the most important and effective was the forest barrier. This consisted of a strip through the forest in which the trees were felled at a point in the trunk just higher than a man's height, in such a way that the felled part of the tree stayed attached to the stump. The tops of the trees were then piled in a criss-cross manner on the side from which the enemy was expected to approach, and were pressed to the ground with stakes. The thin branches were chopped off, and the thick ones sharpened. At those places where it was unlikely that the enemy would appear, the barrier was usually only a few dozen metres deep. But on the routes along which the enemy would probably approach, the depth of the forest barrier could amount to forty to sixty kilometres of impassable obstacles reinforced by palisades, stakes, concealed pits, terrible traps capable of breaking the legs of a horse, and snares of the most ingenious construction.

Forest barriers in Old Russia stretched for hundreds of kilometres; the Great Forest Barrier Line, constructed in the sixteenth century, was more than 1,500 kilometres long.

Fortresses and citadels were built behind these lines, which were carefully protected by light mobile detachments. As the enemy tried to penetrate the barrier, these detachments would launch surprise attacks before withdrawing along secret passages. Every attempt to pursue them ended badly for the enemy. False passages were made through the barriers, and these led the enemy into a zone of traps and ambushes.

It is interesting to note that, when the frontiers of Tsarist Russia moved southwards, the old barriers were not destroyed, but were fully preserved and fortified, while a new line of fortifications, fortresses, and fortified towns was constructed, and in front of them a new forest barrier was built. By the end of the seventeenth century, any enemy who tried to attack Moscow from the south would have had to overcome eight of these forest barriers, which had been made to a total depth of 800 kilometres. This was beyond the capability of any one army to penetrate. But even if anyone had decided to try to overcome all these barriers, he would never have been able to make a surprise attack. The aggressor would have been worn down by enormous effort and

by constant raids effected by light mobile detachments. Even supposing that he overcame all this, he would find the Russian Army, fully mobilized, fresh and ready for battle, awaiting him at the end of the road.

Security zones still retain their importance in the twentieth century. The Red Army understood full well what a security zone was, having had enormous experience of operating in them. During the 1920 campaign to 'liberate' Warsaw and Berlin, the Red Army found itself in a security zone prepared by the Polish Army. Chief Marshal of Artillery N. N. Voronov noted how

the Polish troops destroyed everything in the wake of their withdrawal, railway stations, railway lines, and bridges. They burned villages, crops, and haystacks. We moved forward with great difficulty. We had to ford every small river by wading or by improvised means. Having to carry our ammunition made our progress even more difficult. (*Na Sluzhbe Voennoi*, Voenizdat 1963, p. 34)

After such an experience, the Red Army itself created strong security zones on its own frontiers, particularly its western borders. Special government commissions inspected the country's western regions and determined which zones an enemy would find easiest to cross, and which would afford him most difficulty. Teams of bridge-protection guards, trained in demolition work, were made ready to blow up all the bridges in the western regions. The 60-metre long railway bridge at Olev, for example, could have been blown up by the duplicated explosion system in two and a half minutes. (I. Starinov, *Miny Zhdut Svoego Chasa*, Moscow Voenizdat 1964, p. 24)

Heavy pipe-lines, depots, water pumps, water towers, high embankments and deep cuttings were all prepared to be blown up. (*Ibid*, p. 18) By the end of 1929, 60 teams of demolition sappers, totalling 1,400 men, had been trained in the Kiev Military District alone. These had at their disposal '1,640 fully prepared sophisticated charges and tens of thousands of safety-fuse detonator sets, which were ready literally for instant use.' (*Ibid*, p. 22) Similar activity was also going on in other military districts.

In addition to the teams of demolition sappers which had been set up in the western regions of the country, railway-blocking battalions were formed. One of their tasks was to destroy the main railway junctions in the

event of a retreat and to create defence obstacles on the main arterial routes by destroying roads and laying delayed-action land mines lest the enemy should try to rebuild the roads. There were four such battalions in the Ukraine in 1932. (*Ibid*, p. 175)

Railway points crossings, communications equipment, telegraph wires and in some cases even the rails were got ready to be removed. (M. Tukhachevsky, *Izbrannye Proizvedeniya*, Moscow Voenizdat 1964, Vol. i pp. 65-67)

The Soviet security zone underwent continuous improvements. The number of targets prepared for demolition steadily grew. New defence obstacles were created: forest barriers; artificial reservoirs in front of defensive constructions; preparations were even made to flood some areas.

In the autumn of 1939, the Soviet Union had a great stroke of luck. Under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, it annexed new territories between 200 and 300 kilometres deep. The security zone that had already been set up thus grew considerably in depth. Nature herself could have created these new territories for the express purpose of equipping it as a security zone. They had forests, hills, bogs, deep rivers with marshy banks and, in the western Ukraine, fast-flowing mountain rivers between steep banks. In short 'the terrain favoured defence and the creation of defence obstacles.' (Marshal of the Soviet Union A. Eremenko, *V Nachale Voiny*, Moscow Nauka 1964, p. 71) As if that were not enough, the network of roads was still at a primitive stage of development. Of 6,696 miles of railway lines, only 2,008 had double tracks, but the capacity of even these was limited. It would have been quite easy, were the need to arise, to make these railway lines quite unusable.

It was at this point that the Red Army had spectacular confirmation of the value of security zones to a defending side. In the autumn of that year, the Soviet Union invaded Finland. The attack was no surprise, however, for the Finnish forces were far from the frontier behind their own security zone when it arrived.

The failures of the Red Army on this occasion were not simply the results of miscalculations by the Soviet command. More important was the fact that the Finnish Army was prepared for defence, and ready to make sacrifices. The Finns had erected their security zone in front of their main line of defence. This zone -some 40-60 kilometres deep (*Sovetskaya Voennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 6, p. 504) - was strewn with minefields and defence obstacles. Snipers, sappers and light mobile detachments were extremely active.

The result was that it took the Red Army 25 days to overcome the security zone. They emerged from it facing the main line of defence having suffered great losses, with low morale and without ammunition, fuel or supplies. Space for manoeuvre was severely restricted. One step off the road might be the last one would ever take. The rear units fell behind and found themselves under constant threat of repeated raids by Finnish light detachments, who knew the locality extremely well and who had secret paths through the minefields.

All the Soviet commanders who fought there expressed their admiration of the Finnish security zone. Foremost among them was K. Meretskov, who commanded the 4th Army. (*Na Sluzhbe Narodu*, Moscow IPL 1968, p. 184) After he had finally overcome the Finnish security zone and had assessed its worth, Meretskov was appointed Chief of the General Staff. So how did he make use of his experience in order to reinforce the Soviet security zone which had been set up along the Soviet Union's western frontiers?

Meretskov ordered that:

1. The security zone which had previously been constructed along the Soviet Union's western frontiers should be dismantled, the teams of demolition sappers disbanded, the explosive charges removed, the mines rendered harmless, and the defence obstacles razed to the ground;
2. No security zone should be set up in the new lands;
3. The main forces of the Red Army should be moved right up to the frontiers, without a security zone to protect them;
4. The strategic resources of the Red Army should be brought from the heart of the country and concentrated directly on the frontier;
5. A vast works programme should begin at once to build a network of roads and airfields in western Byelorussia and in the western Ukraine: single-lane roads were to be made into dual-lane roads, the capacity of the roads was to be increased; and new roads leading directly to the German border were to be built.

The results of this ludicrous policy became clear when Poland was partitioned in 1939. Bridges across what were now frontier rivers remained intact, even though nobody used them. There were six such bridges in the zone of the Soviet 4th Army alone. For understandable reasons, the Germans never raised the issue of destroying them, although no one needed them in peacetime. But the Soviet leaders did not raise the issue of destroying them either. The moment the war began, all these bridges were captured by the Germans, allowing a great number of German troops to cross them and catch the Soviet 4th Army napping. This army suffered a crushing defeat, opening the way into the rear of the powerful 10th Army, which suffered a quite unprecedented rout as a result. Encountering no further obstacles in his path, Guderian began his drive for Minsk.

'Why, in particular, were so many bridges across the Bug left intact in the 4th Army zone?' enquires L. Sandalov, former chief of staff of the 4th Army. (*Perezhitoe*, Voenizdat 1966, p. 99) Why indeed? The German command hoped to use the bridges in an aggressive war, so it was clearly not in their interests to destroy them. But what was the Soviet Command hoping for?

The decision to leave the bridges intact is usually explained as a piece of incompetence on the part of the Soviet commanders. But it was Sandalov, whose most striking quality was his exceptional prudence and attention to detail, who was responsible for these bridges. It is interesting that no one has blamed him for doing nothing about these bridges, nor has anyone put him up against a wall for it. On the contrary, in June 1941 he began his rapid rise in rank from colonel to colonel-general, and distinguished himself in many operations.

The German troops advanced further without encountering difficulties, capturing bridges across the Dvina, the Berezin, the Niemen, the Pripyat' and even the Dnieper. A failure to prepare these bridges for demolition could be judged as criminal negligence. But the matter is more serious. They had been prepared for demolition, but were cleared of mines after the common Soviet—German frontier had been established. The mines were cleared everywhere. This means that it happened not because of a whim of individual idiots, but because it was state *policy*. 'Our country,' wrote Colonel Ilya Starinov, 'was now directly adjoined to the West, which contained the powerful military machine of Nazi Germany.'

The threat of invasion hung over England . . . When I learnt that preparations were being made to dismantle the defence obstacles in the frontier zone, I was simply stunned. Even everything which we had succeeded in setting up in the years 1926-33 was in fact eliminated. There were no longer any stores with already prepared charges sited near important bridges and other objectives. It was not only that there were no brigades. There were no special battalions either . . . The Ul'yanovsk School of Special Engineering, which was the only training institution which turned out highly qualified commanders for sub-units equipped with radio-controlled mines, was made into a communications school. (I. Starinov, *op. cit.* p. 175)

The element of surprise - so advantageous to the Germans in June 1941 - could have been reduced had the main Soviet forces been kept away from the actual frontiers. Empty territory, even without any technical defence installations, would have served as a security zone after its own fashion, by allowing the main forces time to get ready for action. But, according to the official Soviet account,

The armies . . . were to deploy directly along the state frontier ... in spite of the fact that its geographical outline was entirely disadvantageous to defence. Even those security /ones stipulated in our pre-war directives had not been technically prepared, (*htoriya Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny*, Voenizdat 1961, Vol. 2, p. 49)

Thus Meretskov was acting against Soviet military interests. So why did Stalin not dismiss him? He did; but not because Meretskov had eliminated the security zone and failed to create a new one, but because Meretskov had not been active enough in building roads, bridges, and airfields in the new regions.

On 1 February 1941, Meretskov's place as Chief of General Staff was taken by General G. K. Zhukov. The work then intensified on a truly Zhukovian scale. Prior to this, there had been five railway brigades in the Red Army. Zhukov immediately increased this number to thirteen. Each brigade consisted of one regiment, two detached battalions and back-up sub-units. Almost all the railway troops were concentrated in the western frontier regions, where they worked intensively at modernizing old railway tracks and laying new ones leading

right up to the frontier itself. (*Red Star*, 15 September 1984) The construction of these lines suggests that the Soviet leadership was looking upon the frontier zone not as a battle zone but as its *rear area* to which, in the event of a rapid advance into the west, it would be essential to send millions of new reservists, millions of tons of ammunition, fuel and other items of supply.

The construction of railways was accompanied by the building of motor highways running directly to the frontier towns of Peremyshl', Brest-Litovsk and Yavarov. When preparations are being made for a defensive war, 'belt' roads are built running parallel with the front, so that troops may be moved from passive sectors to those under threat. These 'belt' roads are built deep in the rear; the frontier regions themselves are left as far as possible without roads or bridges. But the Red Army built both railways and motor highways running from east to west, directly to the front. This is done when preparations are being made to advance, so that reserves can be transferred rapidly from within the country to the state frontier, and so that the troops can subsequently be supplied when they have crossed the frontier.

'The network of motor highways in western Byelorussia and the western Ukraine,' recalls Marshal Zhukov, 'was in a very bad condition. Many bridges were unable to bear the weight of medium tanks or artillery.' (*Vospominaniya i Razmyshleniya*, p. 207) The situation should have delighted Zhukov: the supports of these rickety bridges could have been knocked down; anti-tank mines could have been laid on the banks, snipers posted in the undergrowth, and anti-tank guns put in place. Instead, Zhukov was furiously building roads, and replacing old bridges with new ones, so that tanks and artillery could use them.

The NK VD and Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria in person gave the Red Army enormous help in this mighty work. The term 'the construction organizations of the NK VD' is often encountered in Soviet sources. (Air Chief Marshal A. A. Novikov, *V Nebe Leningrada*, Nauka 1970, p. 65) But we now know whom the NKVD used as manpower. Why else were so many labour-camp prisoners held in the frontier zone, particularly on the eve of the war?

Meanwhile war was clearly approaching. The official *History of the Kiev Military District* (Voenizdat 1972, p. 147) states that 'at the beginning of 1941 the Nazis set about building bridges, railway branch lines and field aerodromes'. These were clear signs that an invasion was being prepared. Yet this is what the Soviet railway troops were doing at exactly the same time. (*Ibid*, P. 143)

The railway brigades which Zhukov had set up accomplished a vast amount of work on Soviet territory. Their main purpose, however, was to operate on enemy territory in the wake of the advancing troops by rapidly overcoming the enemy's security zone, by rebuilding roads and bridges and by altering the narrow Western European gauge on the main railway lines to make it correspond to the broader Soviet standard. After the war began, these brigades were used to put up defence obstacles, but this was not what they had been brought into existence to do.

On the eve of the war, the Soviet railway troops did not prepare the rails for removal or demolition. They did not transport their supplies away from the frontier zones. On the contrary, they stockpiled rails, collapsible bridges, building material and coal in considerable quantities directly on the frontier. It was right there that the German Army captured all these stocks. German documents give evidence of this, as indeed do Soviet sources. Starinov, who was head of the Department for Defence Obstacles and Mining in the Engineering Directorate of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, described the Brest-Litovsk frontier railway station on 21 June 1941. 'Near the railway tracks,' he wrote, 'the sun shone down upon mountains of coal and heaps of brand-new rails beside the tracks. The rails sparkled in the sunshine. Everything breathed tranquillity.' (*Miny Zhdut Svoego Chasa*, p. 190)

Everyone knows that rails very quickly become covered with a thin coating of rust. The point here is that the rails had just been delivered straight to the frontier on the day before the war began. Why?

'Ah, if only Stalin had not eliminated Tukhachevsky, everything would have been different,' was the thought which was constantly hammered into our heads. Tukhachevsky had distinguished himself by his brutality in the shootings of both the peasants in Tambov Province and also of the Kronstad sailors who had been taken prisoner; faced with a real war, he had been defeated by the Polish Army. In all remaining respects he was no different from any other Soviet marshal. 'When preparing an operation,' he wrote, 'it is absolutely essential to make a stockpile of wooden bridges, and to concentrate railway reconstruction units in the necessary sectors . . . when the narrow gauge is being adjusted to a wide one.' (Marshal M. Tukhachevsky, *Izbrannye Proizvedeniya*, Voenizdat 1964, Vol. I, pp. 62-63)

Practically all the Soviet engineering and railway troops were gathered on the western frontiers. Sapper units and units belonging to those divisions, corps and armies which were concentrated on the frontier itself,

as well as other units from other formations which had begun to move up to the border, were all operating in the frontier zone before the war began. The Soviet sappers were busy

preparing the departure positions from which the offensive would begin; laying down roads for columns to move along; surmounting and erecting engineered defences, creating tactical and strategic camouflage, ensuring that the infantry and tanks which formed part of the assault groups interacted properly; protecting forced river crossings . . . (*Sovietskie Vooruzhennye Sily*, Voenizdat 1978, p. 255)

Let not the words 'erecting engineered defences' mislead the reader. By the time that the decisive attack on the Finnish Mannerheim Line began, Soviet sappers had also built several sectors consisting of engineered defence obstacles similar to the Finnish ones. Before going into battle, the newly arrived Soviet troops were put through these defences, which had been put there for training purposes. After that, they went over to the real attack.

With all due respect to the German Army, it must be admitted that it was catastrophically unprepared for a serious war. The impression is given that the German General Staff simply did not know that winter occurs on occasions in Russia, or that the roads were somewhat different from German ones. The oil used to lubricate German weapons congealed in the intense cold, and consequently they did not work. The German *Blitzkrieg* was unable to move with the same rapidity over Russian roads as it had over French ones. Hitler knew that he had to make war in Russia; if German industry was producing arms which were only suitable for use in Western Europe and Africa, who can say that Germany was ready for war with the USSR?

Hitler was lucky, however: Zhukov, Meretskov and Beria had obligingly compensated for the defects in German military planning by building roads and laying down great stockpiles of rails, collapsible bridges and building materials just where the enemy could capture them. What would have happened to Hitler's army had a powerful programme of self-defence been put into effect, with bridges blown up, rolling stock and rails

evacuated, all stores destroyed and the roads wrecked, flooded, turned into marshes and mined? The German *Blitzkrieg* would have skidded to a halt long before it reached Moscow.

It was not, of course, for Hitler's benefit that Meretskov, Zhukov and Beria had built roads and railways and stockpiled supplies. It was to let the Soviet 'liberation' army loose on Europe, with speed and with nothing in its path, and to keep it supplied in the course of its surprise offensive. On the eve of the war, no one in the Red Army was thinking about defensive obstacles. Everyone had his mind on overcoming such obstacles on enemy territory. That is why, under cover of a TASS announcement of 13 June 1939, some Soviet marshals and leading experts on obstacle *clearing* made their secret appearance on the western frontier.

Marshal of the Soviet Union G. Kulik, who had secretly arrived in Byelorussia, discussed the situation with Colonel Starinov. 'Let's have mine-detectors, sappers and trawl equipment!' he demanded (*Miny Zhdut Svoego Chasa*, p. 179) The Marshal was thinking about German territory. All the mines on Soviet territory had already been rendered harmless, and all the obstacles dismantled. 'You have not named your branch correctly,' the Marshal went on to tell him. 'To be in accordance with our doctrine you should call it the branch for the clearance of obstacles and mines. Once we would have thought otherwise, and harped on defence, defence . . . but enough of that!' (*Ibid*, quoted by Starinov) The same problem worried General of the Army Dimitri Grigoryevich Pavlov, the commander of the Special Western Military District. He noted angrily that insufficient attention was being paid to obstacle removal. The Red Army had learnt from its experience in the Finnish security zone, and was carefully preparing itself to surmount the German defences. If only the Soviet marshals had known that the war would begin for them on 21 June, and not as planned in July, then no resources for dismantling mines would have been needed at all.

The German Army broke its own rules and did exactly the same thing. It removed the mines, razed the defences to the ground and concentrated its troops directly on a frontier which had no defensive zone whatever. At the beginning of June, German troops began to remove the barbed wire from the frontier. Marshal of the Soviet Union Kirill Sirnionovich Moskalenko considered this incontrovertible evidence that they would soon begin an aggression. (*Ha Yugo-Zapadnom Napravleny*, Nauka 1960, p. 24)

But of course the Red Army did the same thing very shortly afterwards. The full flower of military engineering thought, including Professor Dimitri Mikhailovich Karbyshev - then a lieutenant-general of engineering troops — came from Moscow to meet on the western frontier. As he left Moscow at the beginning

of June, he told his friends that the war had already begun and arranged to meet them in the 'place of victory.' Once he had arrived on the western frontier, he became feverishly busy. He attended exercises in fording water-defence obstacles, and in surmounting anti-tank obstacles with the latest T-34 tanks, neither of which are needed in defensive warfare. On 21 June, he went over to the 10th Army. But 'before this,' his biographer tells us, 'Karbyshev, accompanied by V. I. Kuznetsov, officer commanding the 3rd Army and Colonel N. A. Ivanov, commandant of the Grodnensk UR [*Ukreplyonnyi Raion* - fortified region] visited the frontier detachment. On the Augustow-Seino road along the frontier, our barbed-wire entanglements were still in place in the morning, but by the time they passed them again on their return journey, the barriers appeared to have been removed.' (E. Reshin, *General Karbyshev*, Izd. DOSAAF 1971, p. 204)

Interestingly, neither the officer commanding the 3rd Army, who had to wage war there, nor the commandant of the fortified zone which in theory was intended for defence, nor the most senior expert from Moscow, who knew that the war had already begun, reacted in the slightest to these measures. On the contrary, the removal of the obstacles coincided with their visit.

Can we imagine the commander of a Soviet frontier sub-unit, an NKVD lieutenant, removing the barbed wire on his own volition? If he were to give such an order, would not his subordinates regard the order as 'clearly criminal'? The lieutenant did give such an order, though, and his subordinates carried it out at the gallop; evidently an order had been received from Lieutenant-General I. A. Bogdanov, the head of the NKVD frontier troops in Byelorussia. Bogdanov clearly realized that war was approaching; on 18 June he took the decision to evacuate the families of servicemen. (*Dozornye Zapadnykh Rubezhei*, Izd. Polit Literatury Ukrainy, Kiev 1972, p. 101)

It is hardly possible that Bogdanov could have decided to evacuate frontier troops' families and, at the same time, to cut the wire, without the knowledge of Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria, the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs and General Commissar for State Security. It is hardly possible that Beria could have made this decision by himself either. Nor did he do so. Beria worked in full co-operation with Zhukov. Above them, Stalin must have co-ordinated the actions of the army and the NKVD. The military and the Chekists were acting in coordination. What is more, they were all in full agreement on essentials, on places and on times.

We are assured that the Red Army suffered its first defeats because it was unprepared for war. This is nonsense. If it had not prepared itself for war, then the barbed wire would have been left intact, if only on the

frontier. This would at least have gained a little time for the army sub-units to bring their weaponry to readiness, and may have averted the fearful catastrophes that followed.

The Chekists certainly did not remove the barbed wire on the frontier in order to allow the German Army to take advantage of the gaps they had opened up. The barbed wire was taken away for other purposes. Try to imagine a situation where, for whatever reason, the German assault had been delayed. What would the Chekists on the frontier have done? Would they have eliminated the frontier barriers, kept the frontier open, and begun again to erect defensive obstacles? Certainly not. There can be only one alternative to this thesis. The Chekists cut the wire in order to allow the 'liberation army' to pass over the enemy's territory, without hindrance, in exactly the same way as they had done before the 'liberation' of Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Bessarabia and Bukovina. Now Germany's turn had come.

CHAPTER 10

Why Stalin Abolished the Stalin Line

Only naive people believe that the chief task of fortified zones is defence. This is not so. Fortified zones are built so that an offensive may be prepared in greater security. They must also securely conceal the deployment of groupings of shock troops, repel any enemy attempt to disrupt their deployment, and support our troops with all possible fire power when they go over to the offensive.

Major-General PIOTR GRIGORENKO

(Memoirs, New York 1981, p. 141)

In the 1930s, thirteen fortified regions, or URs, were built along the Soviet Union's western frontier, in a strip of territory which was unofficially called the Stalin Line.

Each fortified region was in fact a military formation equivalent to a brigade in numerical strength, but equal to a corps in fire-power. Every region was made up of a command and a headquarters, between two and eight machine-gun and artillery battalions, one artillery regiment, several batteries of heavy caponier artillery, a tank battalion, a communications company or battalion, a sapper engineering battalion and other sub-units. Each region covered an area of 100-180 kilometres along the front, to a depth of 30-50 kilometres. A complex system of combat and supply installations, armoured and built of reinforced concrete, was constructed in the zone; there were also underground premises, built of reinforced concrete, to serve as storage depots, electrical power stations, hospitals, command points and communications centres. The underground installations were linked by a complicated system of tunnels, galleries and overlapping communication trenches. Each UR was capable of waging warfare independently and over a long period in conditions of complete isolation.

The basic element of the fortified regions was the DOT, or permanent fire position. In its issue of 25 February 1983, the newspaper *Red Star* gave a description of DOT No. 112 in the 53rd UR, situated in the Mogilev-Podolsk region. This was one of the completely standard DOTs in the Stalin Line.

It consisted of complex tunnelled fortification defences, which contained communication trenches, caponiers, compartments and filtration systems. It also had armouries, ammunition stores, food supplies, a medical unit, a mess room, water supply (which incidentally is still functioning), a recreation and reading room, and observation and command posts. The armament of the DOT consisted of machine-gun positions with three firing embrasures. In these posts there were three 'maxims' mounted on special turrets and two single-gun caponiers with a ydmrn cannon in each one.

One may take this DOT to be an average one. Besides the DOTs, thousands of small combat structures were built, along with enormous fortification ensembles. General P. Grigorenko describes one of them in his memoirs. Built in the same UR in Mogilev-Podolsk, it had eight powerful DOTs, all interlinked by underground galleries. Colonel P. G. Umansky also took part in building the Stalin Line, and in his memoirs he mentions the underground installations in the Kiev fortified region, where they stretched over a distance of many kilometres (Colonel P. G. Umansky, *Na boevykh mbezkhakh*, Voenizdat 1960, p. 35) Colonel-General A. I. Shebunin, another participant in that mighty work of construction, tells us that in the Proskurov UR alone, more than one thousand reinforced concrete defence-works were constructed in just three years. Many of these were concealed by artificial water defences (Colonel-General A. I. Shebunin, *Skol'ko namiproideno*, Moscow Voenizdat 1971, p. 58)

The construction of the Stalin Line was not advertised like the building of the Maginot Line. The Stalin Line was erected in the total darkness of state secrecy. As every strongpoint was being built, the NKVD 'closed' some parts of it 'to prevent some horrible bird flying around there'. (P. Grigorenko, *Memoirs*) Construction work proceeded in all sectors at the same time, but only in one of the sectors was it genuine - in the other cases it was simply a false front. Both the local inhabitants and many of those who were involved in the building at the time had a mistaken idea of what was being built, and where.

There were many differences between the Soviet Union's Stalin Line and the French Maginot Line. It was impossible to pass round the extreme ends of the Stalin Line, as its flanks rested upon the Baltic at one end and the Black Sea on the other. The Stalin Line was built not just for defence against infantry attack, but primarily for defence against enemy tanks. In addition, it had powerful air-defence cover. The Stalin Line also had greater depth than the French system. Apart from the reinforced concrete which was used to build the Stalin Line, large quantities of armoured steel and granite from Zaporozh'e and Cherkassy were employed.

An important difference between the two lines was that the Stalin Line was built deep inside Soviet territory, and not up against the actual frontier; it was protected by a security zone which would have slowed the enemy's advance and worn him down. It also would have acted like a fog at sea which conceals a chain of icebergs behind it. The fortified zones were camouflaged in such a way that, when the attacking troops came up against Stalin's forts, they would have received an unpleasant surprise.

Unlike the Maginot Line, the Stalin Line was not a continuous whole. The fortified regions were separated by wide gaps. When the need arose, these gaps could have been covered with minefields, artificial defences of all kinds, and field defence involving ordinary troops. They could also have been left open, as if to offer the aggressor the choice of not attacking the fortified regions head on, but of trying to pass between them. If the enemy took the opportunity offered, then the mass of advancing troops would be split up into several isolated lines, each one of which would then have to move forward along a corridor which was under fire on both sides, while its flanks, rear, and lines of communication would be under constant and very serious threat.

We shall see later that the corridors which separated these fortified regions had yet another, altogether different purpose.

The 13 fortified regions of the Stalin Line were built by enormous effort and at vast expense during the first two five-year plans. In 1938, it was decided to reinforce all thirteen fortified regions by building heavy artillery caponiers in them. In addition, the construction of eight more fortified regions began. More than one thousand combat installations were concreted into the new fortified regions in the period of one year.

At that very moment, however, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed. The Pact marked the beginning of World War II. It also meant that there was no longer a dividing barrier between the Soviet Union and Germany - they now shared a common frontier.

Stalin could have done a great deal in this very menacing situation to improve the security of the Soviet Union's western frontiers and to guarantee Soviet neutrality in the course of a war. He could, for instance, have ordered that the garrisons on the Stalin Line be strengthened; that the factories producing armaments for the fortified regions should step up their output; that plants which were producing defensive weapons should give priority to anti-tank guns and anti-tank rifles; that the entire construction engineering capability of the country, and its entire resources, be mobilized so that the construction of the Stalin Line be accelerated appreciably; that a start be made on building a second, even stronger defensive system in front of the Stalin Line; that in addition to these two powerful defensive systems, a third belt of fortified zones be built behind the Stalin Line, for example along the eastern bank of the Dnieper; and finally that the troops of the Red Army dig thousands of kilometres of trenches, anti-tank ditches, pits and communication trenches from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

In Autumn 1939, however, when World War II began and a common frontier with Germany was established, all construction work on the Stalin Line was stopped. (V. Anfilov: *Bessmertnyi Podvig*, Moscow Nauka 1971, p. 35) The garrisons in the fortified regions of the Stalin Line were first reduced in size and then disbanded completely. Soviet factories stopped producing armament and special equipment destined for fortification installations. The existing fortified regions were dismantled, and their armament, ammunition and all observation, communications and fire-control equipment were put into storage. (VIZH 1961 No. 9, p. 120) The process of eliminating the Stalin Line gathered speed. Some of the military buildings were handed over to collective farms to be used for storing vegetables; but most of the military installations were covered with earth.

Apart from armaments for the fortified regions, Soviet industry ceased producing many other defensive systems as well. Production of anti-tank guns and 76mm regiment and division guns, which could also have been used as anti-tank guns, was completely stopped. (VIZH 1961 No. 7, p. 101; VIZH 1963 No. 2, p. 12) The anti-tank guns which had already been issued to the troops were not used for the purpose for which they had been intended, but for knocking out enemy firing positions when Soviet troops were on the attack. (Lieu-

tenant-General I. P. Roslyi: *Posledny Prival v Berline*, Moscow Voenizdat 1983, p. 27) Anti-tank rifles were not only taken out of production; they even ceased to be part of the Red Army's armament. (*VIZH* 1961, No. 7, p. 101) Everything connected with defence was mercilessly destroyed and obliterated.

In fairness, however, it must be said that in the summer of 1940, construction began of a belt of fortified regions directly on the new Soviet-German frontier. It was never completed. The Soviet General Staff, not without a certain degree of irony, gave these new fortified regions the unofficial title of the Molotov Line. The decision to embark upon its construction was taken on 26 June 1940. (V. Anfilov, *op. cit.*, p. 162) Construction proceeded very slowly on the new frontier, although the destruction of the old defences went ahead with surprising speed.

The tragedy of the Stalin Line reached its apotheosis in the spring of 1941:

I do not know how future historians will explain this crime against our people. Present-day historians pass over this event in complete silence, and I do not know why. The Soviet government fleeced its people of many billions of roubles (no less than 120 billion, according to my calculations) in order to build fortifications, impregnable to any enemy, along the entire western frontier, from sea to sea, from the grey Baltic to the azure Black Sea. Yet just before war broke out, in spring 1941, powerful explosions thundered along the 1,200-kilometre-long stretch of fortifications. Strong double and single caponiers built of reinforced concrete, firing positions with one, two and three embrasures, command posts, observation posts, and tens of thousands of permanent defensive installations were all blown up on Stalin's personal orders. (Major-General P. G. Grigorenko, *VPodpol'eMozhno Vstretit' Tol'ko Krys*, New York 1981, p. 141)

Thus, the Stalin Line on the old frontier had already been obliterated, while the Molotov Line on the new frontier had still to be built. After the war, and after Stalin died, Soviet generals and marshals chorused their indignation. Chief Marshal of Artillery N. N. Voronov had this to say: 'How could our leadership, having failed

to build the necessary defensive zones on the new western frontier in 1939, take the decision to abolish and disarm the fortified regions on the former borders?' (*Na sluzhbe Voennoi*, Moscow Voenizdat 1963, p. 172)

The Marshal's indignation is false, however. He scolds 'our leadership', but he himself was Colonel-General of Artillery, one of the most senior posts in the Red Army command, at the time. Can it really be that the anti-tank and caponier guns were withdrawn from production without his knowledge? Did he really not know that the Artillery caponiers in the Stalin Line were being stripped of armament and obliterated? Voronov deliberately asks the wrong question in order to distract the reader's attention from the essence of the problem. He seems to think that the Molotov Line should have been built first, and then the Stalin Line broken up afterwards. In putting the question this way, Voronov tacitly justifies the destruction of the Stalin Line; his criticism is not that it was done at all, but only that it was done prematurely.

But why not ask another question - why break up the Stalin Line at all? The events of 1940 had confirmed twice over that two defensive strips are better than one. In 1940 the Red Army paid a high price in blood to break through the Mannerheim Line, compelling Finland to concede to Stalin's demands. Later that year, the German Army passed round the side of the French Maginot Line, broke out on to a broad expanse of territory where it could operate without restriction, and that was the end of the war for France. It is unfortunate that neither France nor Finland had a second line, deep in their heartlands; in that case it is unlikely that either invasion would have succeeded.

Stalin had just such a second line – and then assiduously broke it up. Over the years, Soviet apologists have devised a great number of explanations for this apparent act of folly. One of these is that there was insufficient armament to equip the new fortified regions, so that equipment had to be taken from the Stalin Line. This argument fails on several counts, however. Firstly, if the Molotov Line was short of armament, why were the ordnance plants not ordered to step up production? Not only was no such order given, but the production of standard armaments was actually stopped.

Secondly, the demolition of the Stalin Line began in the autumn of 1939. The arms removed from it were put into storage, because the Molotov Line did not then exist. Indeed, the decision to erect it was not taken until 26 June 1940. So it turns out that first of all the Stalin Line was demilitarized, while later, nearly a year later, the reason, the need and the requirement to do so arose.

Thirdly, the Molotov Line, in comparison to the Stalin Line, was a comparatively weak series of light fortifications, and did not need such a large quantity of armament. In the Western Special Military District of Byelorussia, for instance, 193 combat installations were built on the new frontier, while before that on the old frontier, 876 more powerful combat installations had been disarmed. The ratio of newly built installations to those which had been previously disarmed was still more striking in other military districts. In order to have armed the Molotov Line, therefore, it would have been sufficient to take only *part* of the armament, and a minor part of that, from the Stalin Line. Why then was the armament removed in its entirety from the Stalin Line?

Casement weaponry, machine guns, ammunition, periscopes, communications equipment and gas filters are portable; reinforced concrete installations are not. Even the smallest DOT, with a machine gun and one embrasure, is a reinforced concrete monolith weighing 350 tons, dug into the earth with blocks of granite piled on top of it and covered over with earth, which even had trees growing on it to afford extra defence and camouflage. It was surrounded by ditches and artificial ponds. Could all this have been dragged 200 kilometres westwards?

Even if we accept that the Stalin Line had to be stripped of its armament to equip the new frontier, why blow up its installations? The ordinary foot soldier, armed with his rifle and shovel, can dig a trench to make it difficult and sometimes impossible for the enemy to cross the Line. If you put the same soldier, armed with his rifle or even a light machine gun, not into a mud-hole in the middle of a field, but into even the most simple dismantled DOT, then his tenacity and firmness will increase tenfold. He will have at least one metre of reinforced ferroconcrete over his head, a metre and a half of it in front of him and a metre on each side, all carefully camouflaged from the enquiring gaze of the enemy. If 170 first-echelon Soviet divisions were put into these albeit dismantled boxes, it would have been no simple matter to break through their defences. Defending troops always need something to hold on to: the dismantled forts at Verdun; the bastions at Brest-Litovsk; the walls at Stalingrad; or the trenches in the Kursk salient, which had been abandoned two years previously. Once they have such a foothold, the infantry will dig in in such a way that nothing will smoke them out of their lairs and burrows. They will turn the ruins of a factory, a nineteenth-century bastion or a thirteenth-century citadel into an unassailable fortress.

Even when completely dismantled, the Stalin Line could have provided a line of defence on which the Red Army could have stopped the enemy from reaching the heart of the country. Then the dismantled DOTs, the underground command posts, the excellent hospitals, the concrete-protected store depots, to say nothing of the underground galleries and tunnels, lines of communication and control lines, electrical power stations and water-supply systems, could all have come in useful. But after destroying the Stalin Line, the First Strategic Echelon of the Red Army was moved to the other side of the pre-war frontier. Under cover of the TASS report of 13 June 1941, troops belonging to the Second Strategic Echelon were transferred, in total secrecy, in seven armies to the western areas of the Soviet Union. These armies too were sent beyond the old frontier, and beyond the now dismantled, abandoned and obliterated Stalin Line.

Every soldier knows that defence must be constantly improved; it is one of the most basic requirements laid down by military textbooks. No matter how strong the defences might appear, every soldier will go on doggedly digging up the ground, making the anti-tank ditches wider and deeper, adding a second, third, fourth, and fifth trench to the first one. There is no such thing as an 'adequate' state of defence; if ten anti-tank ditches have been dug, then dig an eleventh.

Soldiers of every army have known this simple truth for many thousands of years now. That is why new defences are built to strengthen and reinforce existing defences, not to replace them. A study of any castle will show that no defence is ever obsolete. An eleventh-century tower will be surrounded by thirteenth-century walls. Around them is a ring of seventeenth-century bastions, which in their turn are ringed by nineteenth-century forts, reinforced by twentieth-century DOTs. According to this basic and universally accepted military principle, the Molotov Line could have served as a complement to the Stalin Line, but never as a replacement for it.

The Molotov Line, however, was created neither as an addition to the Stalin Line nor as a replacement for it, and differed sharply from its predecessor both in concept and in detail. Unlike the Stalin Line, it was built in such a way that it could be seen by the enemy. It was set up in second-grade military sectors, and was not shielded by a security zone, by minefields or other engineered defences. The builders of the Molotov Line did not make use of the many opportunities available to reinforce it, nor were they in any hurry to build it.

The construction of the Molotov Line is just as much an enigma in Soviet history as is the destruction of the Stalin Line. Strange things happened when the new fortified zones were being built. In 1941, vast masses of

Soviet troops were concentrated in the Lvov salient in the Ukraine; a smaller force was concentrated in the Bialystok salient in Byelorussia. Soviet marshals explain that they were expecting the main attack to be made in the Ukraine, and a subsidiary one to be launched in Byelorussia. The main effort made in building the Molotov Line should therefore have been concentrated in the Ukraine, with a secondary drive in Byelorussia. But it had been planned to expend half of all the resources allotted to the construction of the Molotov Line in the Baltic area, a second-grade military sector well away from the expected attack. A quarter of the resources were allocated for Byelorussia, with only nine per cent going to the Ukraine, where according to the assurances of the Soviet marshals 'the main attack was expected.' (Anfilov, *op. tit.*, p. 164)

The fortifications in the Molotov Line were built in second-grade military sectors. For example, six road and railway bridges across the river which formed the frontier in the region of Brest-Litovsk were severed immediately. The main strategic thrust of a war would follow a line running from Warsaw through Brest-Litovsk, Minsk, Smolensk and on to Moscow. These Brest-Litovsk bridges were therefore of the highest strategic importance. A new fortified zone *had* been erected near Brest-Litovsk; but it was far out of the way of the crucial bridges.

The fortified regions of the Molotov Line were built right up against the frontier. They were not protected by a security zone, and in the event of a surprise attack the garrisons would no longer have time to occupy their combat installations and bring their weaponry to full readiness. Unlike those along the Stalin Line, the fortified regions of the Molotov Line were not very deep. Everything which could have been built on the frontier itself, was in fact built there. Defence positions were not built in the rear, nor was it ever planned to build any. (Lieutenant-General V. F. Zotov, *Na Severo-Zapadnom Fronte*, Moscow Nauka 1969, p. 175)

The fortifications were not sited on positions which would favour defence, but followed every bend and twist of the state frontier. The new combat installations were not protected by barbed wire, mines, ditches, stakes, hedgehog entanglements or anti-tank tetrahedrons, nor were any engineered defences erected in the area of construction. Neither were the new installations camouflaged. For example, in the fortified region of Vladimir-Volynsk, 'out of 97 combat installations, 5-7 were covered with earth, while the remainder were virtually de-camouflaged'. (*VIZH* 1976, No. 5, p. 91)

If the reader were to cross the Soviet frontier in the region of Brest-Litovsk, let him turn his attention to the grey concrete boxes which stand almost on the bank itself. These are DOTs which belonged to the southern

tip of the Brest-Litovsk fortified region. They were not covered over with earth at the time, and so remain exposed to this day. The DOTs on the Stalin Line were built in secret, far from the frontier, so that the enemy could not know where the fortifications were, where the gaps between them lay, or indeed whether there were any such gaps at all. Now the enemy could see the entire construction from his side, and learn exactly where the fortifications were. He could make out each separate installation with such accuracy that he could even establish what the line of fire would be from each embrasure. On the basis of this he could determine the entire fire plan and, choosing those strips of land which were not covered by fire, infiltrate himself towards the uncamouflaged DOTs and block the embrasures with sandbags; which is exactly what the Germans did on 22 June 1941.

Marshal Zhukov testified that

the fortified zones were built too close to the frontier and had an extremely unfavourable operational configuration, especially in the area of the Bialystok salient. This enabled the enemy to attack the rear of our entire Bialystok grouping from the area of Brest-Litovsk and Suwalki. In addition, because they lacked sufficient depth, the fortified zones were unable to hold out for long, since they were shot through by artillery. (*Vospominaniya i Razmyshleniya*, APH 1969, p. 194)

Since the Brest-Litovsk and Suwalki areas were so vulnerable to enemy attack, why was use not made of the old, abandoned Russian border fortresses of Brest-Litovsk, Osovets, Grodno Peremyshl' or Kaunas? None of these fortresses is in any way inferior in strength to Verdun, and each could have been turned into an impregnable bastion, thereby raising the stability of the whole defence system. In addition to these fortresses, the regions possessed some old and less powerful fortifications, such as double caponiers, each one intended for a rifle company. The walls and ceilings were of reinforced concrete three metres thick. Colonel Starinov recalled that the head of the GVIU (the Chief Military Engineering Board of the Red Army) 'proposed that use be made of the old Tsarist fortresses near the frontier and set up zones of engineered obstacles. This proposal was never accepted. It was said that it would have served no purpose.' (*Miny Zhdut Svoego Chasa*, Moscow Voenizdat 19, p. 177)

In February 1941, Georgi Konstantinovich Zhukov became Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army. No other marshal or general this century has occupied such a senior post without having suffered even one military defeat. Thus Zhukov, whose greatness had already been proved by his lightning rout of the Japanese 6th Army, held virtually supreme military authority, and might have been expected to bring order to the Molotov Line. Zhukov's arrival, however, did nothing to improve the situation. On the contrary, construction work in the Brest-Litovsk region was given a lower priority. (Anfilov, *op. tit*, p. 166) The meaning of the words 'lower priority construction' need not be explained to the reader who is acquainted with Soviet reality. In practice, it means that construction is almost completely frozen. But even this coin has another side to it. Captured documents of the German 48th Motorized Corps show that the German High Command had formed an altogether different impression. The German troops saw intensive construction work going on day and night; what was more, at night the work took place under floodlights.

What is one to make of this? Were the Soviets really such idiots as to betray their construction sites on the frontier by floodlighting them every night? How can one reconcile 'lower priority construction' with this frenetic burst of floodlit building? One is drawn to the inevitable conclusion that the Molotov Line was built, as Marshal of the Soviet Union I. Kh. Bagramyan put it, as a 'deliberate display'. In his memoirs, Colonel-General Sandalov records a conversation with Mikhail Ivanovich Puzyrev, the commandant of the Brest-Litovsk fortified zone. 'I brought the fortified zone right up to the frontier itself,' Puzyrev told him. 'It was very unusual. Before, we had always built the DOTs a certain distance from the frontier. But there was nothing to be done about it here. We had to be guided by political, and not only by military considerations.' (*Perezhito*, Moscow Voenizdat 1966, p. 64)

This presents us with another enigma. The Soviet troops were concealed in the woods, forbidden to show themselves 'so as not to provoke a war'. But at the same time, as a result of political considerations unknown to us, they were importunately displaying to the enemy their intensive preparations for defence, without fear of provoking any diplomatic or military complications.

How can one reconcile all these conflicting facts? As usual, the apparent inconsistency of Soviet military planning is put down to sheer stupidity. I should have accepted this explanation but for one snag. The Stalin Line and the Molotov Line were the work of the same man, Professor D. Karbyshev, lieutenant-general of the engineering troops. On the Stalin Line he did everything right, well up to the level of world standards and

higher. He provided for everything: the careful camouflaging of every DOT, the great depth of every fortified region, the engineered defences, the security zone and much else.

But then the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed and one of the world's most brilliant military engineers suddenly became stupid, and everything he did had been wrong. Above Karbyshev stood the great Zhukov. Everything he did was right, both earlier and later. But suddenly, in the first half of 1941, Zhukov changed into an idiot and had begun to issue idiotic orders. It was just at the time of Zhukov's arrival at the General Staff that 'the fortified zones on the old frontiers were disarmed to their previous state, while construction on the new frontiers went ahead at a snail's pace'. (Starinov, *op. tit.*, p. 178)

The story about stupid Stalin, stupid Zhukov and the idiot Karbyshev will not hold water, for the reason that at that very same time Adolf Hitler and the German generals were doing exactly the same thing. They took exactly the same decisions, but no one considered what they did to be idiotic.

Between 1932 and 1937, particularly strong fortifications had been built on the banks of the Oder to protect Germany from attacks from the east. They were first-class combat installations which blended into the surrounding terrain and were very well camouflaged, and rank among the highest achievements of military engineering in the first half of our century.

Once the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed, the German army moved east and these splendid fortifications were abandoned, *never again* to be occupied by troops. Many combat installations were used to satisfy other needs. In the Hochwald region, for example, there was a powerful fortification complex containing 22 four-storey combat installations, connected by a 30-kilometre underground tunnel. All this was handed over to the aircraft industry to house a plant which produced aircraft engines. Having moved out to meet the Red Army in the middle of Poland, the German troops began to build a new line of fortified regions. They were built in secondary sectors, right up against the Soviet frontier. Neither minefields nor engineered defences were put down in front of the new fortified regions.

Work went on day and night. The Soviet frontier guards saw what was going on, and reported it 'to the proper quarters'. (*Pogranichnye Voiska SSSR 1939 — iyun' 1941, Sbornik doku-mentov i materialov*, Moscow Nauka 1970, Document Nos. 344 and 287) Construction work went ahead intensively until May 1941, after which,

as Soviet jargon would have it, the defences were 'regraded to the category of non-first priority'. Of 80 combat installations planned to be built on the banks of the frontier river San, only 17 were completed. All of these were inadequately camouflaged. In comparison with the defences on the old German frontier, these were light installations. The walls and ceilings were each 1½ metres thick, and the armoured component parts 200mm. each. On the old frontier on the Oder line, the armoured component parts had been much stronger, with thicknesses up to 350mm.

Exactly the same thing was being done on the Soviet side. On the Stalin Line there were strong armoured cupolas and very heavy armoured parts; in the building of the Molotov Line on the banks of the same river San, Soviet engineers used comparatively thin armoured parts of a thickness of up to 200mm. When I was a Soviet officer, one frequently saw German and Soviet DOTs on opposite sides of the same small river. If photographs of the DOTs were shown to an expert, and he were asked to say where the German and Soviet DOTs were, he would not be able to tell the difference.

Why did the German commanders fail to erect as many strong fortifications on their new frontiers as they had done on their previous border? Because they had no intention of defending themselves for a long period in that place.

A defensive fortification is one thing and an offensive fortification is another. Before launching an attack every general must act in accordance with one of the main principles of strategy and concentrate great masses of troops in very narrow sectors; thus the German troops were concentrated in two salients in the Suwalki and Lyublin areas, while Soviet troops were concentrated in two salients in the areas of Lvov and Bialystok. In order to assemble these shock groupings in the main sectors, the secondary sectors would have to be denuded of their resources, even if nerve were needed to do this. These sectors should have previously constructed fortified zones, so that they should not be left completely exposed. The fire-power and combat installations in these zones would enable fighting troops there to be released for battle.

An offensive fortified zone should be placed to one side of the main axis; your troops will advance over the frontier bridges. Fortifications are not needed here. But, on the side where there are no bridges, your troops must be withdrawn and you must erect a fortified zone in their stead. This will allow a comparatively small garrison to control fairly wide expanses of territory. Offensive fortified zones do not need to have depth. You do not intend to defend yourself here for long. There is no need to put down minefields round about; all the

gaps will be used by your own troops when they move on to enemy territory. The best approach is to move up the DOTs to the frontier river itself, so that when the offensive begins they can be used to give fire support to the advancing troops. There is, of course, no need to build positions in the rear, for by doing so you condemn a part of your garrisons and caponier armament to inactivity. It is better to bring them all up to the frontier itself. Your defensive construction works should not be camouflaged; let the enemy see your defensive building, and let them conclude that you are preparing only for defence.

That was exactly what the German generals did. Not long before, in August 1939, Zhukov had operated precisely in this way at Khalkhin-Gol: 'By these measures, we strove to give the enemy the impression that there was a total absence of preparatory measures of an offensive nature on our side, and to show that we were carrying out extensive works, the purpose of which was to organize defence, and only defence.' (Zhukov, *op. cit.*, p. 161) The Japanese were successfully deceived. They took Zhukov's 'defensive' works at face value, and paid the price when they fell to his crushing lightning strike.

After that, Zhukov did the same thing on the German frontier, although on a much larger scale. But he did not succeed in taking in the German generals; they were familiar with this strategy, having used it themselves. On 22 August 1939, just two days after Zhukov dealt his surprise strike at Khalkin-Gol and while the Molotov—Ribbentrop negotiations were in progress, the German Army was preparing to go into Poland. General Guderian was ordered to take over the 'Fortification Headquarters Pomerania'; the aim was to lull the Poles by making purely defensive preparations. At the same time, he quickly constructed some comparatively light fortifications in secondary sectors, so that a few more fighting troops might be released to take part in the main attack.

Guderian was again building defences in the spring and summer of 1941, but this time it was on the Soviet frontier. If Guderian was building concrete pillboxes on the bank of a river on the frontier, it in no way meant that he was thinking about defending himself. It signified the exact opposite. And if Zhukov was ostentatiously building exactly the same kind of boxes on the bank of the same river, what could that mean?

The Stalin Line was multi-purpose. It could be used to defend the country or serve as a springboard for attack. Wide corridors were therefore left between the fortified regions to allow the mass of Soviet troops to pass through on their way to the west. After the frontier had been moved a couple of hundred kilometres to the west, the Stalin Line completely lost its importance as a fortified springboard for further aggression; and once the Molotov—Ribbentrop Pact had been signed, Stalin no longer had any intention of thinking in terms of defence. This is why the Line was dismantled and then broken up. It was in the way of that great mass of troops who had their sights secretly fixed upon the German frontier. It would also hinder the process of supplying the Red Army with the millions of tons of ammunition, food supplies and fuel it would need on its victorious 'liberation' campaign. The corridors between the fortified zones were perfectly adequate for both military and economic needs in peacetime, but in the course of a war, rivers of consignments of supplies would have to be split up into thousands of little streams, so that they would be invulnerable to enemy counter-action. The fortified regions squeezed transport columns into comparatively narrow corridors. That sealed the fate of the already redundant Line.

Exactly the same situation existed in Germany, on both its eastern and western frontiers. Ever since the Franco—Prussian War, German attacks on France had been traditionally planned to come from the north. The Siegfried Line was built in the 1930s, to the south of this sector; that is, in a secondary sector. The German Army passed far to the west in 1940, and the Siegfried Line turned out to be unnecessary. Since it never occurred to Hitler at the time that four years later he would have to defend himself on his own borders, the Siegfried Line was abandoned. It was turned to account in a very original way. Its combat installations were handed over to farmers for storing potatoes. Some installations, which were fitted with impregnable armoured doors, were simply locked up. When the need arose to open them again, no one could find the keys. (K. Mallory and A. Ottar, *Architecture of Aggression*, Architectural Press, 1973, p. 123)

One may, of course, call outstanding Soviet and German generals idiots, but there was no idiocy here. They were simply aggressors. Both thought in terms of attack, and when their fortifications could no longer be used for the purposes of attack, they were either demolished to make way for their advancing troops or, if the opportunity arose, their combat casements were handed over to farmers for storing potatoes.

CHAPTER 12

Partisans or Saboteurs?

*Hitler will attack the West, with his main forces,
while Moscow will wish to take full advantage of
its position.*

TROTSKY (BO, Nos. 79-80, 21 June 1939)

After the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact had been signed, the Soviet Union began the systematic destruction of the neutral countries, so that it could 'move up in all its mass to the German frontier just at that time when the Third Reich had become involved in a conflict to carve up the world'. The 'liberation campaigns' proceeded apace, but in Finland a pause occurred. As we have already seen, the Red Army was caught in the Finnish security zone.

Here is a classic situation. A Soviet column of tanks, motorized infantry and artillery is moving along a road through the forest. No one can step off the road, either to the right or to the left, because there are mines there. There is a bridge ahead. The sappers have checked it has not been mined. The leading tanks roll on to the bridge, and the tanks, along with the bridge, go up in the air. Explosive charges had been placed inside the supports of the bridge when it was built. It is not so easy to detect that this has been done, and even if the charges were detected, any attempt to remove them would result in an explosion. Thus the Soviet column, winding like a huge snake across many kilometres, comes to a halt on the road. Now comes the turn of the Finnish snipers. They are in no hurry – crack, crack. Silence descends on the forest. Then crack, crack again. The snipers are firing from somewhere in the distance. They hit only the Soviet commanders. Crack, crack. And commissars as well. It is impossible to comb the woods. We have not forgotten that on either side of the road are impassable minefields. Any attempt by Soviet sappers to approach the blown-up bridge or to defuse the mines on both sides of the road will be ended by a single shot from a Finnish sniper. Crack! The Soviet 44th Rifle Division, which was bottled up on three parallel roads by three blown-up bridges, lost its entire

command staff in one day of fighting. At night the Soviet column is raked by rifle mortar fire from somewhere in the depths of the forest. Sometimes long bursts of machine-gun fire hit the helpless column from somewhere behind the undergrowth. Then all falls silent again.

It is said that the Red Army did not show itself at its best in Finland. That could not be more true. But what would any other army have done in its place? Pull the column back? But the heavy artillery tractors with their great howitzers on tow would not have been able to push their trailers backwards, as these weigh many tons. The snipers now hit the tractor drivers — crack, crack. Finding itself in trouble, half the column goes into reverse and moves backwards. But behind it meanwhile, another bridge has been blown up. The column is now trapped. All the approaches to this bridge have been mined as well, and here too the snipers can take their time. They fire at the commanders, the commissars, the sappers, the drivers — crack, crack. Ahead lies the almost inaccessible line of Finnish reinforced-concrete fortifications, the Mannerheim Line. It is impossible to break through it without artillery and without thousands of tons of ammunition. When the Soviet troops came up against the Finnish fortifications, their heavy artillery was far behind, lying immobilized on roads through the forests, between minefields and blown-up bridges, under sniper fire.

Having been taught such a lesson in Finland, the Soviet commanders must surely have drawn the appropriate conclusions? Surely light partisan detachments would have been set up even in peacetime in the western parts of the USSR to face a possible enemy invasion? Nature herself could have created the western regions of the Soviet Union expressly for partisan warfare on the communications of any aggressor moving eastwards.

Stalin did indeed form such detachments as far back as the 1920s. In Byelorussia alone, there were in peacetime six partisan detachments, each with a strength of between 300 and 500 men. If these numbers seem small, one must bear in mind that the detachments were composed only of commanders, organizers, and specialists of the highest quality. Every peacetime partisan detachment was a nucleus around which powerful formations of several thousand men could be formed at the outbreak of war.

Secret bases for peacetime partisan formations were set up in impassable forests and on little islands in the boundless marshes. Underground shelters, hospitals, storage depots and underground workshops for producing arms and ammunition were all built in peacetime. In Byelorussia alone, arms, ammunition and equipment sufficient for 50,000 partisans were placed in underground caches for use in a possible war.

Secret schools were set up to train these partisan leaders, organizers and instructors. Secret scientific research centres worked on developing resources for use in partisan warfare, including special equipment, arms and communications equipment. The partisans went on periodic training courses, on which the OSNAZ divisions of the NKVD usually assumed the role of the enemy.

In addition to these partisan formations, small underground groups were trained, but not to take to the forests when the enemy struck. Their purpose was to remain behind in towns and villages in order to help the enemy and be of service to him, while all the time gaining his trust . . .

Work of this type was not only going on in Byelorussia, but also in the Ukraine, the Crimea and the Leningrad District, among other places. Alongside the activities of the secret police, Soviet military intelligence, in parallel with the NKVD but completely independently of it, was engaged in exactly the same work, equipping secret bases, shelters, secret billets and rallying points, and equipping lines for clandestine communications. The military intelligence had its own secret schools, its own organizers, its own instructors.

The Communist Party was also training many of its leaders in the western parts of the country, with a view to their going underground in the event of the territory falling into enemy hands. With their long-standing criminal traditions, the communists knew how to keep their secrets. These traditions went back to their underground activities of the 1920s and 1930s; where the need to arise, many Party organizations could again become deeply conspiratorial centres of secret conflict.

These partisan detachments were set up in what was termed the Death Zone — the Soviet security zone where, in the event of Soviet troops being withdrawn, all bridges had to be blown up, tunnels demolished, railway junctions rendered completely unusable, railway points, crossings and even rails and telephone cables lifted and carried off to the interior. The partisans remained behind only to ensure that the targets which had been destroyed were not restored. The partisans were virtually invulnerable; their leaders knew the ways through the vast minefields, and could shake off any pursuit by heading for the mined forests and marshes, into which the enemy had no means of finding a way.

All this constituted an excellent system of defence: the Stalin Line; the vast security zone in front of it with its boundless minefields; and the partisan detachments, ready to operate from the first minute of war. But in 1939, Hitler found himself in a very troublesome strategic situation, where he had to wage war in the west,

not the east. From that moment onwards, Stalin's defensive systems were no longer needed. The Soviet partisan movement was abolished at the same time as the Stalin Line and the security zone. Partisan detachments were disbanded, arms, ammunition and explosives removed, the secret dug-outs and store depots covered with earth, and the partisan bases laid waste. All this happened in the autumn of 1939. But as autumn drew to its close, the Red Army began its 'liberation' of Finland, and there it encountered all those elements of self-defence which until recently had existed in the Soviet Union: the line of reinforced-concrete fortifications, the security zone in front of it, and the light partisan-like detachments operating in this zone. After he had been taught a severe lesson in Finland, did Stalin perhaps then change his mind and set up new partisan formations in the western regions of the Soviet Union? He did not.

On 22 June 1941, numerous improvisations were set in motion, including the formation of a partisan movement. Set up at the last minute, it only grew to its full power in 1943-44. Had Stalin not abolished it in 1939, it would have attained its full strength in the first days of the war, and would then have been many times more effective.

As the war progressed, the partisans had to pay a high price in blood for every bridge they detonated. Before a bridge could be blown up, it had first to be captured, and then guarded while the surrounding trees were felled and the adjacent ground mined. But where were the partisans to find explosives? If any could be found, how much could the partisan group carry along with it? While the detonation was being prepared, the charges had to be hastily put in place, not in the bridge supports but *on* the spans. The enemy could quickly repair such a bridge once it had been blown up, and then the partisans would have to start all over again from the beginning. While the enemy was repairing one bridge, the other bridges would still be functioning, so the enemy could regulate his flow of transport.

Previously, however, everything had been made ready to blow up *all* the bridges, in such a way that no partisan blood would have been spilt. To blow them up by simply pressing a button in a secret partisan bunker, and then, from the far side of impassable minefields, to pick off the officers, the sappers and the drivers with snipers' rifles. The German Army was exceptionally vulnerable on the roads. The *Blitzkrieg* could be slowed down considerably by the complete absence of bridges, by hundreds, thousands and indeed millions of partisans' mines on the roads, by ambushes, and by sniper terror from the first hours of the invasion.

Who then abolished the Soviet partisan movement at the very moment that World War II began, and why? GRU Colonel Professor I. Starinov, one of the fathers of Soviet military terrorism, commanded a secret school in those years which trained partisan groups which were under the command of Soviet military intelligence. In his excellent memoirs, the Colonel names the culprit: 'Arms and explosives which had been safely hidden in the ground were waiting for their time to come. But before that hour struck, the concealed partisan bases were laid waste, unconditionally, knowingly and, for certain, on Stalin's direct orders.' (*Miny Zhdut Svoego Chasa*, p. 40)

KGB Colonel S. Vaupshas, one of the veterans of Soviet political terrorism, was at that time commanding an NKVD partisan detachment in Byelorussia. He explains the reason why the partisan formations were abolished: 'In those menacing pre-war years, the doctrine of war on foreign territory was in the ascendancy. It was of a clearly pronounced offensive nature.' (*Na Trevozhnykh Perekrestkakh*, Moscow, IPL, p. 203)

One may agree with the KGB colonel, or one may dispute what he said. No one else, however, has yet offered any other reason why these partisan bases and formations were eliminated.

Once Stalin had done away with the partisan formations in 1939, he did not dismiss the partisan leaders. After the war had ended, much material was published in the Soviet Union on the war and the period which preceded it. I have collected the case histories of dozens of people who were being trained in 1939 to fight in partisan formations in the western parts of the Soviet Union. After 1939, the fate of these people was identical. They were either sent off to OSNAZ formations of the NKVD, or else they found themselves joining very small groups near the Soviet Union's western frontier, for some unclear purpose.

Take the two colonels we have already met, Starinov and Vaupshas; two veterans, one from military intelligence, the other from the secret police. On 21 June 1941, Colonel Starinov found himself in the frontier town of Brest-Litovsk, in an area of railway lines leading to the bridges across the frontier. He did not go there to blow up the bridges. He had left Moscow a few days earlier, he was told, on an exercise. But when he arrived at the frontier, he was told that there would not be any exercises. So this experienced saboteur sat down at the frontier to await further orders. Here is an interesting detail which we shall require later. A

soldier named Schleger worked for Starinov as his driver from the day the war began. He was a German national.

The war came to the Chekist S. Vaupshas, not in the frontier area, but on enemy territory. Vaupshas had a surprising life history. For many years, up to and including 1926, he fought in a Soviet partisan detachment on Polish territory and killed people in order to further the world revolution. After that he became one of the managers of the great GULAG building sites. Later, in the course of the civil war in Spain, he protected and controlled the Politburo of the Spanish Communist Party and the Spanish Security Service. After that, Vaupshas became leader of a partisan detachment in Byelorussia. After the partisan detachments earmarked for a defensive war had been abolished, Vaupshas, having been given the command of an OSNAZ battalion of the NKVD, set off to 'liberate' Finland. Finally, in 1941, this terrorist, this GULAG overseer and scourge, was transferred to the territory of the probable enemy' in order to carry out some secret mission there.

Perhaps he was sent there for some defensive purpose? No: because as soon as the defensive war began, he immediately returned to Moscow.

CHAPTER 12

Why Did Stalin Need Ten Airborne Assault Corps?

In the battles to come, we shall operate on the territory of the enemy. That is prescribed by our rules. We are military people, and we live according to these rules.

COLONEL A. I. RODIMTSEV
(from his speech at the 18th Congress
of the Party, 1939)

Airborne assault troops are intended for attack. Countries concerned only with their defence did not need them. Before World War II, there were two exceptions. Hitler was getting ready for aggressive wars, and in 1936 he created his airborne assault troops. By the time that World War II began, the parachutists among these troops numbered 4,000. Stalin was the other exception. He established his airborne assault troops in 1930. By the beginning of the war, the Soviet Union had *more than one million* trained paratroopers - 200 times more than all other countries in the world put together, including Germany.

The Soviet Union was the first country in the world to create airborne assault troops. When Hitler came to power, Stalin already had several airborne assault brigades. A parachute psychosis was already raging in the Soviet Union. The older generation can remember the time when no municipal park could get by without a parachute tower, and the parachutist's brevet became an indispensable symbol of macho masculinity for every young man. It was not at all easy to obtain such a brevet; they were only given to those who had made real parachute jumps from an aircraft, and the only persons who were allowed to make such jumps were those who had previously passed tests in running, swimming, shooting, grenade-throwing (both long-distance and precision), in surmounting obstacles, in the use of anti-chemical defensive resources and in many other skills indispensable in war. Parachute-jumping was in effect the concluding stage of the individual training given to future soldiers of the airborne infantry.

In order to appreciate the seriousness of Stalin's intentions, it must not be forgotten that the parachute psychosis reigned in the Soviet Union at the same time as did the terrible famine. Throughout the country, the bellies of children were swollen with hunger, but Comrade Stalin was selling grain abroad in order to buy parachute technology, to build great silk-producing complexes and parachute factories, to cover the country with a network of airfields and aero clubs, to put up parachute towers in every municipal park, to train thousands of instructors, to build drying rooms and storage depots for parachutes, to train one million well-fed parachutists and to buy the arms, equipment and parachutes they needed.

Parachutists are not needed in a defensive war. To use a parachutist as ordinary infantry in defensive warfare would be a ridiculous waste of resources. Sub-units of paratroopers do not have to carry the same heavy weaponry as the ordinary infantry do, and therefore their stability in defensive battle is considerably lower.

The cost of training of one million Soviet parachutists was dear, and Stalin paid for the training of these parachutists and for their parachutes with the lives of Soviet children in great numbers. For what purpose were these parachutists trained? Certainly not to protect these children who were dying of hunger. People in our village in the Ukraine still remember the young woman who killed her own daughter and devoured her body. Everyone remembers it because she killed *her own* daughter. They do not remember those who killed the daughters of others. In my village people ate belts and boots. They ate acorns in the bedraggled wood nearby. The reason for all this was that Comrade Stalin was preparing for war. He was preparing as no one had ever before prepared. True, all these preparations turned out to be unnecessary when the defensive war came.

Airborne assault troops are not necessary in a defensive war. There is no point in throwing them into the rear of the enemy in such a conflict; it is much simpler to leave partisan detachments behind in the forests as you withdraw.

It could be argued that these million Stalinist parachutists were simply material from which combat sub-units - battalions, regiments, brigades - would be established. Sub-units had to be set up and given intensive training.

In the 1930s, the western regions of the country were repeatedly shaken by very large-scale manoeuvres. These manoeuvres had only one theme. That was the operation in depth, a surprise attack launched by a vast number of massed tanks striking to a great depth. The scenario was always simple, but formidable. In the course of each exercise, the surprise attack by the land troops would be preceded by a no less unexpected and no less crushing strike by the Soviet Air Force against 'enemy' airfields. This would be followed by a parachute assault landing with the purpose of capturing the airfields. This first wave of parachutists would be followed by a second wave of paratroopers carrying heavy weapons, who would land by plane and then disembark on the captured airfields.

In the course of the manoeuvres held in Kiev in 1935, a parachute assault force of 1,200 men was dropped, immediately followed by an air-landed assault force of 2,500 men armed with heavy weaponry including artillery, armoured cars and tanks.

In Byelorussia in 1936, in the course of practising the same offensive theme, a parachute assault force of 1,800 men was dropped. They were followed by an air-landed assault force of 5,700 men armed with heavy weaponry. In the same year, the full complement of the 84th Rifle Division made an air-landed assault in the course of offensive manoeuvres in the Moscow Military Division.

In 1938, as he could see the 'liberation campaigns' coming, Stalin established a further six airborne brigades with a strength of 18,000 parachutists. In 1939, Stalin abolished the partisan bases and formations which had been intended to operate on their own territory, and established new assault landing sub-units, regiments and detached battalions. In the Moscow Military District, for example, three regiments, each made up of three battalions, were set up along with several detached battalions, each one with a strength of between 500 and 700 men. (*Ordena Lenina Moskovsky Voennyi Oknig*, Moscow 1985, P. 177)

Soviet assault landing brigades made their first parachute landings in combat conditions in June 1940. The 201st and 204th Brigades landed in Romania, and the 214th in Lithuania, near its frontier with East Prussia. Both assault landings seriously worried Hitler, especially the landing in Romania. The entire German Army was concentrated in France at the time, and Romania was the source of its oil supplies. Had Soviet transport aircraft gone 200 kilometres further before discharging their loads, Germany would have been left without oil, the very life-blood of war.

In 1940, Stalin crushed all the neutral countries dividing the Soviet Union from Germany, so that the two powers now shared a common frontier. Stalin ought then, it would seem, to have reduced his airborne units; all that lay to the west was Germany and its allies, with whom the Soviet Union had signed a non-aggression pact.

But Stalin did not disband his airborne units. On the contrary, in April 1941 five airborne corps were secretly deployed in the Soviet Union. All five were set up in the western regions of the country. In order to appreciate the magnitude of this development, it must be remembered that even today there is not one formation in existence any where which has the full right to bear the title of airborne corps. A corps is too large and too expensive to maintain in peacetime.

In addition to the usual assault landing infantry, the airborne corps had fairly powerful artillery and even battalions of light amphibious tanks. All the corps were given intensive training for airborne assault warfare. They were concentrated in woods far from the gaze of outsiders. They were all established sufficiently close to the frontier for them to be dropped on target countries without further redeployment to more forward bases. The 4th and 5th Corps were aimed at Germany, the 3rd at Romania, and the 1st and 2nd at both Czechoslovakia and Austria. One of their missions was to cut the oil pipe-lines in the mountainous areas through which they passed on their way from Romania to Germany.

The Directorate of Airborne Troops was set up in the Red Army on 12 June 1941, followed by another five new airborne corps in August. This second series of airborne corps was not intended as a response to the German invasion, for it is quite impossible to use paratroopers in such massive numbers in a defensive war. Of all the corps of the second series, not one fought in the war in its proper function. Of all the corps in the first series, only one corps was used as intended and on only one occasion, in the course of a counter-offensive in front of Moscow. A third series of airborne corps came later, and one of these corps made an air assault landing in 1943.

The five corps of the second series are a good example of the Red Army developing through inertia. The decision to establish these corps was taken before the German invasion, and was never countermanded. In any event, the parachutes, the weaponry and even the paratroopers in the airborne corps of the second series were all prepared before the German invasion.

Apart from the airborne corps, brigades and regiments, there were also a great number of airborne battalions in the ordinary Soviet infantry. Marshal Bagramyan states that in early June 1941, in the 55th Rifle Corps which was then deployed on the Romanian frontier, intensive training was being given to several parachute assault landing battalions. Judging from Bagramyan's description, as well as from other sources, it seems that the 55th Rifle Corps (there were in all 62 rifle corps in the Red Army) was more the rule than the exception.

Apart from purely parachute sub-units, some ordinary rifle divisions were trained to make air-landed assaults in the rear of the enemy. On 21 June 1941, for example, a specially trained division mounted an air-landed assault in the rear of the 'enemy' in the course of exercises being held in the Siberian Military District. Until then, all Soviet experiments in airborne assault landings were carried out in the western regions of the country. So why should such experiments suddenly be taking place in Siberia? Because at that point in time all the troops in the Siberian Military District had already been secretly combined into the 24th Army which was about to turn up on the German frontier. The 24th Army was carrying out its final exercises before boarding the westbound trains. No comment is called for on the objectives at which this training was directed.

No country in history, or indeed all countries in the world put together, including the Soviet Union, has ever had so many paratroopers and air assault landing sub-units as Stalin had in 1941. If one counts up all the airborne troops in the world, including the Soviet airborne troops in existence at the end of the twentieth century, the total comes to only thirteen divisions, of which eight are Soviet. The reasons which impelled Stalin to establish airborne troops in such numbers, and especially the furious pace at which these extremely powerful airborne corps were set up in 1941, have still to be studied and explained.

While gathering material on Soviet airborne troops, I turned my attention to an interesting detail. Each Soviet commander with the rank of colonel or major-general who at that time either belonged to the airborne forces or was preparing to join them, had sergeants and soldiers of German extraction in his immediate entourage. One commander had a German working for him as his personal driver. Another had a German batman, while a third had a German orderly. Each of these Soviet commanders speaks of it as though it were an amusing

detail of no importance. They say, of course, that the Germans began the war, and here am I with a driver who is a German. But he is a good lad, of course, disciplined and devoted. Colonel K. Stein, who commanded the 2nd Brigade of the 2nd Airborne Corps had a soldier of German origin as his batman. Colonel A. Rodimtsev, the commander of the 5th Brigade of the 3rd Airborne Corps had a German driver. This, incidentally, is the same Rodimtsev who proclaimed at the Party Congress that the Red Army would fight only on enemy territory.

I happened to hear Rodimtsev make a speech when he had become a colonel-general. He was very eloquent. He said that in 1942 his guardsmen were holding the very last houses right on the Volga in Stalingrad. His brigade, like everyone else, had to be re-cast into ordinary rifle divisions, and so they had had their parachutes taken from them. They were given defensive weapons instead, and they acquitted themselves not at all badly in the fighting. But in 1941 neither Rodimtsev nor his subordinates had any thought for defence. They had no defensive weaponry, nor had they studied defensive tactics. But they had studied offensive tactics, and they did have parachutes.

At the beginning of 1941, Stalin needed paratroopers, more paratroopers and still more paratroopers. Many Soviet generals and senior officers hastened to change the branches in which they were serving. A particularly high number of commanders got ready to leave the cavalry, which had outlived its time, in order to become paratroopers, including Rodimtsev himself. To do this, an ability to speak German was essential. Cavalry general Lev Dovator's widow, writing in the newspaper *Red Star*, recalled the beginning of 1941: 'There was one German in our regiment. So Lev Mikhailovich brought him home pretty well every day. They practised, you see, in conversation. And by the time the war started, he could already speak German fluently.' (*Red Star*, 17 February 1983)

The Red Army's links with the German communists were close and long-standing. When he came to the Soviet Union, Ernst Telmann himself was in no way shy about appearing in Soviet military uniform. Walter Ulbricht was enrolled as a soldier in the 4th German Proletariat Rifle Division. That was done for effect, but there were other less obvious things going on. As early as 1918, the Special School for German Red Commanders was set up in the Soviet Union. It was run by Oscar Obert, a German communist. The school changed its name more than once, first becoming secret, then overt, then secret again. The school turned out quite a few combat commanders of German nationality. Some of the graduates from the school attained the

rank of general in the Red Army. At the beginning of 1941, many graduates of this and other similar schools aspired to march under the combat banners of the Soviet airborne corps.

A study of publications on the Soviet airborne corps which were formed in 1941 leads us to the conclusion that the number of officers, NCOs and soldiers bearing clearly German surnames was, not to put too fine a point on it, higher than normal.

CHAPTER 13

The Winged Tank

The air force must be rendered ineffective and destroyed on the airfields . . . Success in putting the air forces out of action on the ground depends on the surprise element in the action taken. It is important to catch the air forces on the airfields.

Marshall. S. KONEV (VIZH, 1976,
No. 7, p. 75)

Training hundreds of thousands of paratroopers and providing parachutes for their use was only part of the task. Military transport planes and gliders were also required. The Soviet leaders understood this very well. That is why the parachute psychosis of the 1930s was also accompanied by a glider psychosis. Soviet glider pilots and their gliders were well up to world standards, and indeed higher. By the beginning of the Second World War, out of eighteen world gliding records, thirteen were held by the Soviet Union.

The best builders of Soviet military aircraft were sometimes deflected from their main work in order to make glider planes. Even Sergei Korolev, who was later to create the first sputnik, was set to work on developing gliders, which he did with great success. If builders of war planes and ballistic missiles were put to work on making gliders, the purpose was obviously not simply to win world records. Had Stalin been interested in breaking records, why did he not put the best minds to work on creating new racing bicycles?

That Soviet gliding was heading in a military direction is beyond dispute. Even before Hitler came to power, the Soviet Union had seen the creation of the first airborne cargo glider in the world, the 6-63, made by the plane builder Boris Dmitriyevich Uralpov. Heavy gliders were invented which were capable of lifting a freight-carrying vehicle. P. Gorokhovskiy even created an inflatable rubber glider; after they had been used behind enemy lines, they could be loaded on to a transport aircraft and returned to their own territory to be used again.

The Soviet generals were dreaming of throwing not only hundreds of thousands of airborne infantrymen into the West, but hundreds and possibly thousands of tanks as well. Soviet aircraft designers were looking hard for a way in which to realize this dream by the most simple and least expensive means. Oleg Antonov, who was later to design the largest military transport aircraft in the world, suggested that the ordinary tank, produced in series, should be fitted with wings and a tail unit, and its hull used as the framework for the whole of this surprisingly simple construction. This system was given the initials KT, which stood for the Russian words for 'winged tank'. The switchgear for the air vanes was fixed on to the tank cannon. The tank crew controlled the flight from inside the tank by means of turning the turret and raising the barrel of the cannon. The entire construction was astonishingly simple. Of course, the risks involved in flying in a tank were unusually high, but then human life was cheap.

The KT flew in 1942. There is a unique photograph of a tank, complete with wings and tailpiece, flying through the air, in a book (*Soviet Tanks and Combat Vehicles of World War Two*, 1984) published by Stephen Saloga, a prominent Western tank expert.

Just before landing, the tank engine started up and its caterpillar tracks began revolving at maximum speed. The KT then landed on its own tracks and gradually braked. The wings and tailpiece were then discarded, and the KT became an ordinary tank again.

Oleg Antonov missed the beginning of the war with his winged tank; hostilities did not begin as Stalin had planned, and this extraordinary machine turned out to be just as unnecessary as the million parachutists.

The Soviet plane designers had their mistakes and failures, their frustrations and defeats. But their successes were beyond doubt. The Soviet Union entered the war with many times more gliders and glider pilots than the rest of the world put together. In 1939 alone, the Soviet Union had 30,000 trainees simultaneously under instruction in glider-flying. Piloting skills often attained a very high standard. In 1940, for example, a demonstration was given in the Soviet Union of a flight of eleven gliders being towed by one aircraft.

Stalin did everything to ensure that there were enough gliders available for his pilots. It was not single-seater sports gliders that he had in mind, of course, but multi-seater ones built for airborne assault. The end of the 1930s saw intensive competition between more than ten Soviet aircraft design offices to see who could

create the best airborne assault glider. Apart from the winged tank, Oleg Antonov also designed the multi-seater A-y airborne assault glider; V. Gribovsky invented the excellent G-II airborne assault glider; D. N. Kolesnikov designed a glider, the KZ-20, which could carry twenty soldiers; while G. Korbula was working on the design of a jumbo glider.

In January 1940, the Central Committee (that is to say Stalin) ordered that a Directorate for the Production of Airborne Assault Transport Gliders be set up under the Peoples' Commissariat for the Aviation Industry. 1940 was taken up with intensive preparatory work, but from spring 1941 onwards, mass production of airborne assault gliders began in the plants operating under this new directorate.

This burst of glider production has interesting implications. The gliders produced in the spring of 1941 would have to have been used in the summer of that year, or by early autumn at the latest, since it would have been impossible to keep them safe until 1942. All the hangars, and there were not very many of them, had long been crammed full of the gliders which had already been produced. It would have been simply out of the question to keep a great airborne assault glider in the open air for any length of time, exposed to the rains and winds of autumn, to frosts and to heavy snowfalls weighing many tons.

The mass production of airborne assault transport gliders in 1941 meant that they were intended to be used in 1941. If Stalin had intended to throw hundreds of thousands of his paratroopers into Western Europe in 1942, then the mass production of gliders would have had to be planned for 1942.

The glider is a means of delivering cargoes and groups of paratroopers without parachutes. Paratroopers equipped with parachutes are conveyed into the areas behind enemy lines by military transport aircraft. The best military transport plane in the world at the outbreak of war was the legendary American C-47 or 'Dakota'. This excellent aircraft, albeit under another name, formed the base upon which Soviet military transport aviation was built. For some reason or other, the United States government sold Stalin the licence to produce it before the war, along with the highly complex equipment which it needed. Stalin took full advantage of this opportunity. So many of these C-47s were produced in the Soviet Union that some American

experts believe that, when the war began, the Soviet Union had more of these aircraft than the United States did.

In addition to the C-47s, the Soviet Union also had several hundred obsolete TB-3 bombers, which had been down-graded to military transport aircraft. All the large-scale airdrops which took place in the 1930s were made from TB-3 aircraft. Stalin had enough of them to airlift several thousand parachutists and heavy weapons, including light tanks, armoured cars and artillery, simultaneously.

No matter how many military transport aircraft Stalin built, he would have had to use them intensively, day and night, over a period of weeks or months if he wanted to carry a great body of Soviet paratroopers into the enemy hinterland, and then keep them in supplies. This gave rise to the problem of how to keep the aircraft undamaged on their first trip, so that they could make subsequent runs. The losses of aircraft, gliders and paratroopers on the first trip could be enormous; on the second, they would be even greater, because the element of surprise would have been lost.

The Soviet generals understood this very well. It was obvious that a massive drop of paratroopers could only be achieved if the Soviet Union had absolute supremacy in the air. The newspaper *Red Star* stated quite categorically on 27 September 1940 that it was impossible to land these great numbers of parachutists successfully without air supremacy.

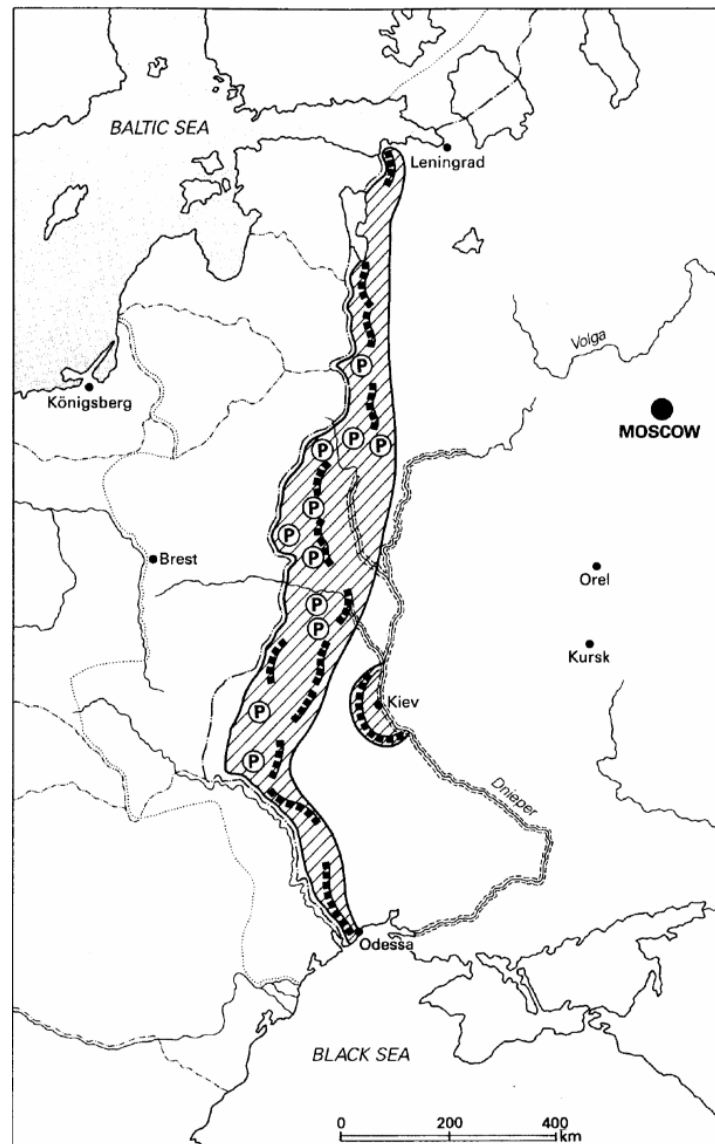
The *Field Service Regulations* is the basic document, graded top secret, which lays down the procedures for Red Army operations in war. The issue which was in force at the time was *Field Service Regulations 1939*, known as PU-39. It lays down simply and clearly that an 'operation in depth' in general, and a mass drop of parachutists in particular, can only be carried out in conditions where the Soviet Air Force has supremacy in the air. The *Field Service Regulations*, as well as the *Operational Air Force Regulations* and the *Instructions on the Independent Use of Air Force* all envisaged a vast strategic operation to be carried out in the initial period of the war, with the purpose of knocking out the enemy's air power. According to the design of the Soviet Command, air arms from various fronts and fleets, the air arm of the High Command and even the fighter arm of the Anti-Aircraft Defences (PVO) all had to take part in that operation. These regulations considered that the element of surprise was the main guarantee of the success of the operation. The surprise operation to knock out enemy air power had to be carried out 'in the interests of the war as a whole'. In other words, the

surprise strike at the airfields had to be so powerful that the enemy air force would not be able to recover from it before the war ended.

In December 1940, at a secret meeting attended by Stalin and members of the Politburo, a senior commander of the Red Army discussed the details of such operations. These were called, in Soviet jargon, 'special operations in the initial period of war'. General Pavel Rychagov, the officer commanding the Soviet Air Force, insisted on the necessity of camouflaging the Soviet Air Force's preparations in order to 'catch the whole of the enemy air force on the ground'.

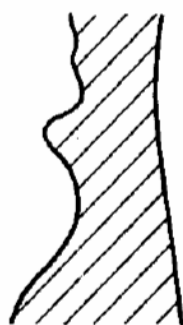
It is quite obvious that it is not possible 'to catch the whole of the enemy air force on the ground' in time of war. It is only possible to do so in peacetime, when the enemy does not suspect the danger.

Stalin created so many airborne troops that they could only be used in one situation: after a surprise attack by the Soviet Air Force on the airfields of its enemy. It would be simply impossible to use hundreds of thousands of airborne troops and thousands of transport aircraft and gliders in any other situation.



MAP I

As soon as Britain and France declared war on Germany, the Red Army began to destroy its own defensive systems. The Soviet Command was no longer interested in defending its own territory.



The 'death' zone is a security zone against a surprise attack from the West. Inside this zone, all transport, communications and water supply systems and industrial installations were made ready for demolition. Minefields and other engineered obstacles were set up to a depth of up to 150 kilometres. The zone was completely cleared of mines in the autumn of 1939.



Partisan detachments and bases had been set up in peacetime. They were dissolved in September 1939.



In the fortified regions of the 'Stalin Line', the work of demilitarization and destruction began in autumn 1939.



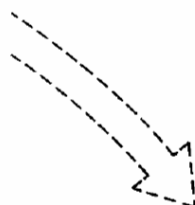
The combat operations zone of the Dnieper Naval Flotilla. The Flotilla was disbanded in June 1940.

MAP 2

The First Strategic Echelon of the Red Army.



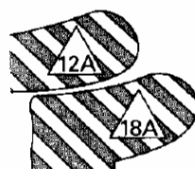
The Soviet invasion armies of the First Strategic Echelon. Behind them, another seven Soviet armies were making their way to the frontier.



The deployment of the First Strategic Echelon rendered the defence of the Soviet Union almost impossible. Even a very low-powered strike by the enemy in this direction would have led immediately to the loss of five Soviet armies, including the 9th, which was the most powerful in the world, and the loss of vast material wealth, highly fertile lands, the undefended bases of the Black Sea fleet, and strategic air bases. It was precisely such a strike which the First German Tank Group delivered in June 1941 . . .



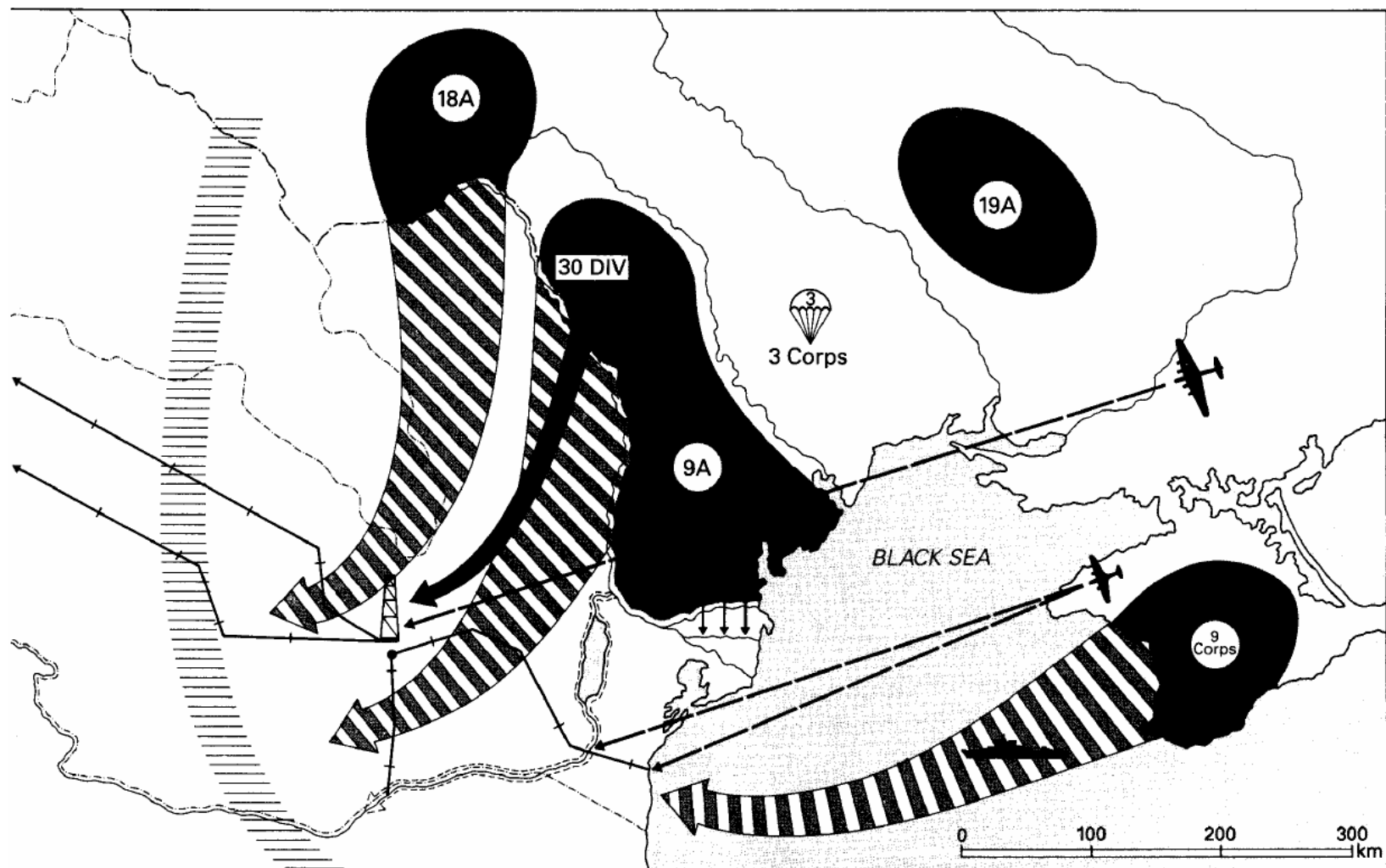
The 9th Army was concentrated not on the German border, but on the frontier with Rumania. A 9th Army strike at Rumania would be a strike at the undefended oil 'heart' of Germany.



The mountain invasion armies. This was the only possible direction in which they could have moved, along undefended ridges. They would have made it possible both to cut Germany's oil 'jugular' and to prevent the movement of German reserves into Rumania.

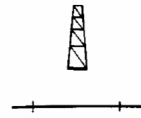


The 'first wave' airborne corps. Another five airborne corps were secretly being formed deep inside the Soviet Union.



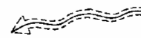
MAP 3

How the Red Army was prepared to seize and destroy the Rumanian oil-fields.

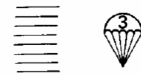


The Ploesti oil-fields, Germany's chief source of oil.

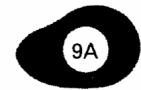
The main pipelines for supplying oil to Germany and for loading it on to river- and sea-going tankers.



The Soviet Danube Naval Flotilla and the only possible way of using it in an offensive war. In a defensive war, the Flotilla would be unnecessary.



The Third Airborne Corps and the zone of its possible operational use. The Corps was set up in April 1941.

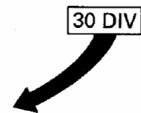


The 9th Army was secretly deployed on 14 June 1941, as TASS stated that the Soviet Union was not preparing for war.



The combat task of the 9th Army, according to the evidence of Air Marshal A. Pokryshkin.

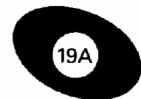
The assault crossing of the Danube by divisions of the 9th Army's 14th Rifle Corps. Previously prepared and carried out in the first days of the war.



The 30th Mountain Rifle Division, part of the 9th Army, and the only place where it could be used for its intended purpose.



The 18th (Mountain) Army, secretly deployed on 13 June 1941, and the only possible direction which its operations could have taken. There are no other mountains in this region.



The 19th Army, the most powerful in the Second Strategic Echelon, was transferred from the Northern Caucasus. It contained mountain rifle divisions which could only have been used in Rumania.



The 9th Special Rifle Corps, in collaboration with the Black Sea Fleet, began intensive training in carrying out a naval assault landing operation on an enemy shore.

And overleaf



The Black Sea Fleet subjected the principal Rumanian oil port of Constanza to an artillery bombardment in the first days of the war.



The 4th Long Range Bomber Corps had Ploesti as its principal target in the event of war.



The 63rd Air Brigade of the Black Sea Fleet was specially trained to raid targets in the oil producing industry including, in the first days of the war, Constanza and the strategic pipelines which cross the Danube.

CHAPTER 14

On to Berlin

Of all the aggressive armies which have ever existed in the past, the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army will be the most aggressive.

(Field Service Regulations of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, 1939, p. 9)

Among the many defensive systems which the Soviet Union possessed was the Dnieper Naval Flotilla. The great Dnieper river bars the road for any aggressor bent on moving into the heart of Soviet territory from the west. All the bridges across the Dnieper were mined before 1939, and they could have been blown up in such a way that nothing could have been done to repair them. In all their previous campaigns, German troops had never before had to ford a water barrier as formidable as the Dnieper. In a defensive war, the German thrusts could have been brought to a complete halt, at least in the middle and lower reaches of the river, simply by pressing a few buttons.

It was in order to prevent the fording of the river and the placing of temporary crossings over it that the Dnieper Naval Flotilla was set up in the 1930s. By the beginning of the Second World War, the Flotilla consisted of 120 naval vessels and launches, including eight powerful monitors, each with a displacement of 2,000 tons, armour in excess of 100mm, and 152mm cannons. The Dnieper Flotilla also had its own air arm, as well as shore and anti-aircraft batteries. The left bank of the Dnieper is eminently suitable for action by naval river vessels. A multitude of islands, channels, backwaters and inlets enable even the largest naval vessels to take cover and launch surprise attacks to forestall any attempt to ford the river.

The formidable barrier formed by the Dnieper, the bridges ready to be detonated, and the river Flotilla working in cooperation with the field troops, artillery and air force, could have safely barred the way to the industrial regions of the southern Ukraine and the Soviet bases on the Black Sea. The German *Blitzkrieg* could have been stopped on the river-banks, or at least held up there for several months. Had that happened,

the war would have taken an entirely different course. But as soon as Hitler turned his back on him, Stalin ordered that the mines be cleared from the Dnieper bridges, and that the Flotilla be disbanded. The Dnieper Flotilla could be used only on Soviet territory, and only in a defensive war. Since Stalin was not anticipating a defensive war, he had no need for the Flotilla.

Instead of one defensive flotilla, Stalin then created two new ones, the Danube Flotilla and the Pinsk Flotilla. The Soviet Danube Flotilla was formed before the Soviet Union acquired an outlet to the Danube. In the course of Zhukov's 'liberation campaign' in the Romanian frontier regions, Stalin took Bukovina and Bessarabia from Romania. Right at the mouth of the Danube, a sector of the eastern bank of the river, some dozens of kilometres long, passed into the possession of the Soviet Union. The Danube Flotilla, which had already been set up in expectation of this event, was moved there immediately. To transfer ships there from the Dnieper was no easy matter. A few vessels were transported across by rail, while the larger ones were brought through the Black Sea when the weather was calm.

The Danube Naval Flotilla included about 70 naval river vessels and launches, sub-units of the fighter air force, and anti-aircraft and shore artillery. The conditions where the base had to be built were frightful. The Soviet bank of the Danube Delta was barren and exposed. The vessels had to moor at open berths, with Romanian troops sometimes only 300 metres away.

In the event of a defensive war, the entire Danube Flotilla would have fallen into a trap the moment hostilities began. The enemy could simply rake the Soviet vessels with machine-gun fire, preventing them from raising anchor and casting off. In a defensive war, moreover, the Danube Naval Flotilla would have had no useful function. Given its location, there were simply no defensive tasks for it to fulfil. The Danube Delta consists of hundreds of lakes, impassable swamps and hundreds of square kilometres of reed marshes. It is the last place through which an enemy would choose to attack the Soviet Union.

There was only one way to explain the siting of the Danube Flotilla; its purpose was to carry out combat operations upstream while Red Army troops were making a general advance. If you gather 70 river vessels in the delta of a great river, they have nowhere to go except upstream. This meant that they would have to operate on the territory of Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Germany.

The Danube Flotilla was of no use to anyone in a defensive war, and it was condemned to be destroyed immediately in its open moorings on a bank raked by enemy gunfire. In an offensive war, however, the Danube Flotilla would be a mortal danger to Germany. It only had to move 130 kilometres upstream for the strategic bridge at Chernavada to come under fire from its guns. That in its turn would mean that the flow of oil from Ploesti to the port of Constanza would be cut off. Another 200 kilometres upstream and the entire German war machine would come to a halt simply because German tanks, aircraft and submarines would have been left without fuel.

It is interesting that the Danube Naval Flotilla had several mobile shore batteries, equipped with 130mm and 152mm cannons. If the Soviet High Command had really concluded that someone would attack the Soviet Union through the Danube Delta, then it ought to have had the shore batteries dig in immediately, and build reinforced concrete caponiers for them at the first opportunity. Yet no one built any caponiers; the guns were mobile and remained mobile. There was only one way to make use of their mobility, and only one direction in which they could be moved. In offensive operations, mobile batteries accompany a flotilla, moving along the bank and giving fire support to the combat vessels.

The reaction of the commanders of the Danube Naval Flotilla to the beginning of the war between the Soviet Union and Germany was interesting. To the Soviet commanders, the word 'war' did not mean defence, but advance. As soon as they learnt that the war had begun, the Soviet commanders put the finishing touches to their preparations to launch an assault landing operation. The action to be taken by the Soviet Flotilla commanders, and also by the commanders of the 14th Rifle Corps, whose divisions were concentrated in the Danube Delta area, and by the commanders of the 79th Frontier Detachment of the NKVD, had been previously planned and worked out with great care. On 25 June 1941, the Danube Flotilla vessels, under cover of fire from the shore batteries and artillery of the 14th Rifle Corps, landed reconnaissance and sabotage sub-units of the NKVD on the Romanian bank. Regiments of the 51st Rifle Division of the 14th Rifle Corps were next to be landed. Members of the Soviet assault landing force acted swiftly and decisively. A complex operation involving river vessels, aircraft, field, shore and shipborne artillery, and sub-units of the Red Army and the NKVD had been successfully executed with clockwork precision. Everything had been prepared, co-ordinated, agreed and checked many times over. On the morning of 26 June 1941, the red flag was hoisted over the cathedral in the Romanian town of Kilia. A powerful springboard on Romanian territory 70 kilometres

long had fallen into the hands of Soviet troops. The Danube Flotilla prepared for further offensive action higher up the river. It only had to sail another 130 kilometres upstream to cut the oil supplies. In the absence of any resistance, and there was hardly any of that, it could have taken no more than one night to get there. The 3rd Airborne Corps, stationed in the Odessa region, could be dropped to help the Flotilla.

The Danube Flotilla was perfectly capable of moving a few dozen kilometres upstream. It proved this later. Formed a second time in 1944, though without aircraft or heavy monitors, the Danube Naval Flotilla fought its way 2,000 kilometres up the Danube and ended the war in Vienna. In 1941 the Danube Flotilla had considerably more strength and was faced by considerably less resistance from the enemy than was the case in 1944-

Both Hitler and Stalin fully understood the meaning of the expression 'oil is the life-blood of war'. Colonel-General Alfred Jodl quotes Hitler, in an argument with Guderian, as saying 'You want to advance without oil — all right, we shall see what will come of it.' As early as 1927, Stalin was seriously occupying himself with matters related to the approaching World War. For Stalin, the central strategic issue was oil. On 3 December of that year, he declared that 'It is impossible to wage war without oil, and the side which has an advantage in oil has a good chance of victory in the coming war.'

The importance of the oil supply must be borne in mind when trying to decide who was responsible for beginning the war between the Soviet Union and Germany. In June 1940, when no one was threatening the Soviet Union, dozens of Soviet combat river vessels appeared in the Danube Delta. This step was of no defensive significance. It was, however, a threat to the Romanian oil pipelines, which were totally unprotected. It was also to become a mortal threat to the whole of Germany. In July 1940, Hitler held detailed consultations with his generals, and reached the depressing conclusion that it would be no simple matter to defend Romania. If Germany attempted to do so, the supply-lines would be overstretched and would have to pass through mountainous areas. If a large number of troops were to be thrown into the defence of Romania, then western Poland and eastern Germany, along with Berlin itself, would be open to a Soviet attack. Nor would it help to concentrate a great number of troops in Romania and support her at any price; the oilfields could be destroyed by the fires which would break out if Romania became an arena for fighting.

In July 1940 Hitler first expressed the thought that the Soviet Union could be dangerous, especially if German troops were to leave the Continent for the British Isles or for Africa. In a conversation with Molotov on

12 November 1940, Hitler explained that it was essential to keep many German troops in Romania, clearly alluding, for Molotov's benefit, to the Soviet military threat to Romanian oil. Molotov let the allusion pass over his head. That is why Hitler, having thought everything over after Molotov had departed, gave the order in December that Operation Barbarossa should go ahead.

In June 1940, while the German Army was fighting in France, Zhukov, acting on Stalin's orders and without any prior consultations with their German allies, occupied Bessarabia, which was then a part of Romania, and introduced river vessels into the Danube Delta. Were Hitler to take one more step westwards towards Britain, where was the guarantee that Zhukov, again acting on Stalin's orders, would not make another move, of just another 100 kilometres, to deal a fatal blow to the Romanian oilfields?

Hitler asked the head of the Soviet government to remove the Soviet threat to what, in terms of oil, was in effect the heart of Germany. Stalin and Molotov did not remove the threat, thus provoking Hitler to take reciprocal action. B. H. Liddell-Hart, the British military historian who has made a detailed study of this subject, has established that the German plan in June 1940 was very simple. In order to defend Romania from Soviet aggression, a German attack had to be delivered in some other place, in order to draw the Red Army's attention away from the oilfields. In the course of sorting out the options, it was recognized that the blow would have to be both powerful and sudden. The numbers of troops earmarked for such an attack gradually grew, until finally, and this was not recognized at the time, practically all German land forces and a large part of the German Air Force were down to take part in it.

Hitler's calculation was justified. By striking elsewhere, Hitler compelled the Soviet troops to be withdrawn all along the front. The Danube Naval Flotilla was cut off from its troops with no way to escape. Most of its vessels had to be scuttled, while enormous quantities of stores, which had been intended to supply the Flotilla as it moved upstream in the Danube, were simply thrown away.

Hitler's attack was powerful, but not fatal. Macchiavelli observed that a powerful attack which is not fatal entails the death of its deliverer. Stalin recovered from the surprise blow, although he did so with difficulty. He formed new armies and flotillas to take the place of those which had been lost in the early days of the war, and he cut Germany's oil jugular, admittedly several years later than planned.

The reason for Stalin's seizure of Bessarabia in June 1940 is explained in a telegram dated 7 July 1941, which Stalin sent to General of the Army I. Tyulenev, the commander of the Southern Front. Stalin demanded that Bessarabia should be held at all costs, 'in view of the fact that we need Bessarabian territory as a springboard for attack to organize an offensive'. Although Hitler had launched his surprise attack, Stalin was still not thinking about defence. His chief concern was organizing an advance from Bessarabia. An advance from Bessarabia, however, was an advance on the Romanian oilfields.

Stalin made few mistakes in his career. One of the few, but his most important one, was to seize Bessarabia in 1940. He should either have seized Bessarabia and then moved immediately on Ploesti; or else he should have waited until Hitler had landed in Britain, and then seized Bessarabia and the whole of Romania. Either course of action would have marked the end of the 'thousand-year Reich'. Stalin had already taken one step in the direction of the oil, and had captured a springboard for a future offensive. He then stopped to bide his time. By doing this, he revealed his interest in Romanian oil and scared Hitler, who until that moment had been waging war in the west, south, and north, without turning any of his attention to the 'neutral' Stalin.

The Soviet seizure of Bessarabia and the concentration there of powerful aggressive forces, including an airborne assault corps and the Danube Flotilla, compelled Hitler to look at the strategic situation from an altogether different viewpoint and to take the appropriate preventive measures. But it was already too late. Even the Wehrmacht's surprise attack on the Soviet Union could no longer save Hitler and his empire. Hitler understood where the greatest danger was coming from, but it was already too late. He should have thought about it before the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed.

In Marshal Zhukov's memoirs there is a map showing the location of Soviet naval bases in the first six months of 1941. Among these bases is one near the town of Pinsk in Byelorussia, no less than 500 kilometres from the nearest sea. A naval base in the marshes of Byelorussia is reminiscent of the old Russian childhood joke about a submarine in the steppes of the Ukraine. But there was nothing very funny about this.

After the Dnieper Naval Flotilla had been disbanded, some of its vessels were transferred to the Danube Delta, while others were taken upstream to a tributary of the Dnieper, the river Pripyat'. Far upstream, at a point where the river narrowed to a width of 50 metres, a base was built for the new flotilla.

The Pinsk Naval Flotilla was hardly inferior in strength to the Danube Flotilla. It had no fewer than four large monitors, and some two dozen other vessels, an air squadron, companies of marines and other sub-units. The Pinsk Naval Flotilla could not be used in defensive action. The monitors which had gone there could not even be turned round. If the vessels were needed for defence, they would simply have to return to the Dnieper, for there was absolutely nothing for them to do on the quiet forest river Pripyat', for the enemy could hardly make his way into these impenetrable woods and swampy marshes.

The purpose of the Pinsk Naval Flotilla would have remained incomprehensible were it not for the Dnieper-Bug Canal. Immediately after western Byelorussia was 'liberated', the Red Army began to dig a canal 127 kilometres long from the town of Pinsk to Kobrin. Its construction went on in summer and in winter. Taking part in the building work were sappers belonging to units of the 4th Army, and 'construction organizations of the NKVD', that is, thousands of GULAG prisoners. The fact that Colonel (subsequently Marshal) of Engineering Troops Aleksei Proshlyakov was in charge of the building of the canal indicates that its purpose was purely military. The conditions under which the canal was built were appalling. The equipment sank into the swamps, which left only one way to complete the canal within the time laid down by Stalin. That was to do everything by hand. The canal was built. How much it cost in human lives, scarcely anyone knows. But who "was counting?

The canal linked the Dnieper river basin with the basin of the river Bug. Why? To trade with Germany? But trade went through the Baltic and by rail. It was not possible for cargo ships of any commercial freight-carrying capacity to pass each other in the canal. The journey would be a long one; from the Dnieper to the Pripyat', from the Pripyat' through the canal to Mukhavets, and from there to the Bug (which at that time carried no commercial shipping), and then from the Bug finally to emerge on the Vistula. No, the canal was manifestly not built for trade; its purpose was purely military.

Nor could this military purpose have been the defence of the Bug. The Soviet Union possesses only one small stretch of the Bug near Brest-Litovsk, where the river makes a sharp turn towards Warsaw. No

defensive preparations were being made in these regions. Even the Brest-Litovsk fortress was to have no more than one battalion in the event of war, and that was not for defence, but for garrison duties.

The only purpose of the canal was to let ships pass through to the Vistula basin and thence further westwards. Once the Soviet Union found itself in a defensive war, it had to be blown up to prevent German river vessels from the Vistula from reaching the basin of the Dnieper. All the vessels of the Pinsk Flotilla were blown up as well.

A flotilla was again formed on the Dnieper at the end of 1943. Once again it sailed up the Pripyat', and once again the Soviet sappers built a canal from the Pripyat' to the minor river Mukhavets, which led to the Bug. Admiral V. Grigor'ev, who took over the new flotilla near Kiev in 1943, recalls a conversation with Marshal Zhukov:

'By following the Pripyat' you will reach the western Bug, the Narev and the Vistula leading to Warsaw, and further on to cross into the rivers of Germany, perhaps leading, who knows, even to Berlin itself!' He turned round sharply, looked at me searchingly, and repeated, stressing every word 'To Berlin itself, yes?' (*VIZH*, No. 7, 1984, p. 68)

Admiral Grigor'ev eventually got to Berlin with his flotilla. In *The Marine Infantry in the Forests of Byelorussia* any book on the history of the Soviet Navy, we shall find the symbolic snapshot showing the flag of the Soviet Navy with the Reichstag in the background.

The way things turned out, Stalin arrived in Berlin through responding to Hitler's attack. But this happened in a way which Stalin did not foresee. Had he believed in the possibility of a German attack, he would have put millions of GULAG prisoners to work on digging anti-tank ditches along the frontier. However, Stalin intended to get to Berlin, not in response to an attack, but on his own initiative. That is why the GULAG prisoners and the Red Army sappers were not digging anti-tank ditches, but filling them in and building a canal from east to west.

Let us not forget these GULAG prisoners whom Stalin destroyed in the quagmire of the swamps in 1940, so that the communist flag could one day fly over the capital of the Third Reich.

CHAPTER 15

The Marine Infantry in the Forests of Byelorussia

*We have been taught that wars no longer begin
with the chivalrous calls of 'I'm coming after you'.*

Admiral N. KUZNETSOV,
(*Nakanune*, Moscow 1966, p. 306)

Prior to 1940, the Red Army did not have any marine infantry. It was cheaper and simpler to use ordinary infantry for land battles, and landings on distant shores had not yet entered Stalin's plans.

But then Hitler burst westwards, and turned his unprotected back to Stalin. This imprudent move brought in its train the most radical structural changes inside the Red Army, did away with what remained of defence and sharply reinforced the strike force. In June 1940, while Hitler was invading France, the Soviet marine infantry was born.

At that time, the Soviet armed forces contained two oceangoing fleets, two sea-going fleets and two river flotillas on the Amur and on the Dnieper. The ocean-going fleet was not given any marine infantry; the Pacific and Arctic Oceans for the time being did not interest Stalin. The Amur Flotilla, which protected the Soviet Far East, was not given any marine infantry either. The Dnieper Naval Flotilla, as we have already seen, was divided into two offensive flotillas. Of these, the Pinsk Flotilla, which was deployed in the forests of Byelorussia, was given a company of marine infantry. It is interesting that marine infantry were stationed in the Byelorussian marshes, although there were none on the high seas. A conclusion can be drawn from this as to where Stalin was preparing his defences, and where he was preparing for an offensive.

The Soviet Baltic Fleet, whose only possible enemy could be Germany and its allies, was given a brigade of marine infantry with a strength of several thousand men.

The Soviet marine infantry was given its baptism on 22 June 1941 defending the Liepaja naval base. The base was less than 100 kilometres from the German frontier. It had no land defences and had not been prepared for defence. But according to the testimony of Soviet admirals and of German captured documents,

Soviet submarines were crammed into Liepaja 'like herring in a barrel'. The official history of the Soviet Naval Fleet published by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR openly admits that Liepaja had been prepared as a forward base for the Soviet Fleet to fight an offensive war at sea. (*Plot V Velikoi Orechestvernoi Voiny*, Moscow Nauka 1980, p. 138) The marine infantry in Liepaja were so close to the German frontier that they were taking part in defensive fighting even on the first day of the war, although they certainly had not been formed for this purpose. Ordinary infantry are better for defensive fighting than the marine infantry.

The Danube Naval Flotilla had two companies of land troops, but these are not officially recorded as marine infantry. This, however, is not evidence of a great love for peace. We already know that, even before Germany invaded, at least two Soviet rifle divisions, the 25th Chapaev and the 51st Perekop, which were deployed near the Danube Delta, were trained (and very well trained) to go into action as marine infantry.

The Black Sea Fleet had even more powerful forces. Officially it did not possess any marine infantry, but in early June 1941 the 9th Special Rifle Corps under Lieutenant-General Pavel Batov

was secretly transferred from the Caucasus to the Crimea. This corps was unusual in its composition, its armament, and in the direction which its combat training had been given. On 18 and 19 June 1941, the Black Sea Fleet carried out large-scale exercises on an offensive theme. In the course of these exercises, one of the divisions belonging to the 9th Special Rifle Corps was put aboard warships and carried out an assault landing on the 'enemy' coast. This kind of assault landing had never been practised by the Red Army before.

Moscow attached particular importance to the fleet and the 9th Special Rifle Corps having joint exercises. These exercises took place under the observation of high-ranking commanders who had come specially from Moscow to attend them. One of these officers was Vice-Admiral Ilya Ilyich Azarov. He later recalled how all those taking part felt that the exercises were being held for an ulterior motive, and that they would soon have to put their newly-acquired skills into practice in a real war, which would not, of course, be fought on their own territory. (I. I. Azarov, *Osazhdennaya Odessa*, Moscow Voeniz-dat 1962, pp. 3-8)

If war broke out and the Soviet High Command used the 9th Special Rifle Corps in a way appropriate to its type and the training it had been given, where could it be landed? In theory, there were only three possibilities: Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey. But wherever the corps was landed, it would have to be supplied at once. In order to do this, either more troops would have to be landed, or else Soviet troops would have to hasten to join up with the 9th Special Rifle Corps. In any case, the supplies would have to come through Romania.

By a strange coincidence, the 3rd Airborne Assault Corps was also in the Crimea at the time. They were carrying out large-scale exercises, in which the corps headquarters and staff were airdropped along with brigade staffs.

Soviet historians never link these events together — the exercises of the 14th Rifle Corps in making assault landings from ships of the Danube Flotilla; the 3rd Airborne Assault Corps making assault landings from aircraft and gliders; and the 9th Special Rifle Corps making assault landings from the warships of the Black Sea Fleet. But these events are all connected in place, time, and purpose. They were preparations for aggression on a massive scale; preparations in their final stages.

CHAPTER 16

What are 'Armies of Covering Forces'?

The basic and dominant strategic operational idea behind the modern 'army of covering forces' is active surprise invasion. It is clear from this that the modern defensive term 'army of covering forces' is a screen to conceal a surprise offensive blow to be dealt by the 'invading army'.

*(Problems of Strategic Deployment,
Frunze Military Academy, 1935)*

In the European part of the Soviet Union there were five military districts which shared common frontiers with foreign countries. The First Strategic Echelon was made up of troops from these five frontier districts and three fleets. These frontier and indeed all other districts had divisions and corps in their structure, but no armies.

Armies had existed in the Civil War, but they were disbanded after it had ended. An army is too large a formation to be maintained in peacetime. The only exception was the Special Army of the Red Banner. We cannot take it into account here, however, since this body included all the Soviet troops in the Far East and Trans-Baikal, and also the air force, naval forces, military settlements, and other elements. This vast shapeless creation embraced collective farms and even had its own concentration camps. The unusual nature of this formation was highlighted by the fact that it bore no number, while at the head of its huge organization stood a Marshal of the Soviet Union.

In 1938, for the first time ever in peacetime, two armies, the 1st and the 2nd, were formed in the Far East. It was entirely understandable that the Soviet government should take this step. Relations with Japan were very bad and prolonged periods of hostility frequently overflowed into real fighting in which great numbers of troops were used.

Up until this point, there had never been any armies in the European part of the country since the time of the Civil War. Hitler's coming to power, the economic, political and military crisis in Europe, the direct clash between Soviet communists and the fascists in Spain, the German *Anschluss* in Austria and its seizure of Czechoslovakia; none of these events caused Soviet armies to be set up in the western part of the country.

At the beginning of 1939, the Soviet Union, with the Great Purge behind it, was entering a new era of its existence. Its beginning was marked at the 18th Party Congress by a speech by Stalin, which in Ribbentrop's words was 'accepted with understanding' in Berlin. Soviet foreign policy was rapidly changing course: Britain and France were openly called warmongers, and if Stalin was not actually offering Hitler the hand of friendship, Soviet diplomats were clearly letting Hitler know that if he were to extend his hand, then it would be accepted.

That was the outward face of this new era. In 1939, however, the Soviet Union began to form armies in the European part of its territories. For geographical reasons alone, it would have been impossible to use these armies against the 'warmongers' of Britain and France. Against whom then? Surely not against Hitler, with whom negotiations about *rapprochement* were being held with such enthusiasm behind the scenes?

Thus while Soviet diplomats were 'seeking the road to peace', armies secretly appeared on the western frontiers, suddenly and in whole series: the 3rd and 4th Armies in Byelorussia, the 5th and 6th in the Ukraine, and the 7th, 8th and 9th on the Finnish frontier. These armies were growing in strength, and new armies were being added to them: the 10th and 11th in Byelorussia, and the 12th in the Ukraine.

Communist propaganda sometimes tries to present the matter in such a way as to suggest that the Soviet Union began to form its armies only after the Second World War began. But it was not like this. There is sufficient evidence to prove that Stalin decided to form the armies *before* the war broke out. Even according to official Soviet sources, the armies were set up before the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The 4th and 6th Armies are known to have been already in existence in August 1939. There is also knowledge of the existence of the 5th Army in July. The 10th and 12th Armies were set up 'before the Second World War began', that is before 1 September 1939. (*Soviet Military Encyclopaedia*) Of the remaining armies, they are also known to have been set up in the areas of forthcoming conflicts, and that these conflicts subsequently broke out there.

Shortly after they had been formed, each of these armies got down to its real task. All seven armies deployed on the Polish frontier were involved in the 'liberation' of Poland, while the three armies on the Finnish border 'helped the Finnish people throw off the yoke of the oppressors'. Three armies were not enough here, so new ones, the 13th, 14th and 15th, were added.

When the Winter War in Finland ended, four Soviet armies on the Finnish frontier appeared to withdraw into the shadows and dissolve. Shortly afterwards the 15th Army appeared in the Far East, the 8th was seen on the frontiers with the Baltic states, while the 9th turned up on the Romanian frontier. 'Requests from the workers' in these countries to come and liberate them were soon forthcoming. And the valiant Soviet armies then liberated Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Bessarabia and northern Bukovina. After this, the 9th Army again withdrew into the shadows. Like the 11th Army, it was ready to make an appearance again at any moment. And as we shall see, it did just that.

After the 'liberation' campaigns had been completed, not one of these armies was disbanded, in spite of the vast expenditure needed to maintain them. This was unprecedented in the whole of Soviet history. Until this point, armies had only been formed during wartime, and only in order to fight in war. Now there was no one else left in Europe to 'liberate' — except Germany. It was just at this point that the process of forming new armies was appreciably stepped up.

Two armies, the 16th and the 17th, were established in Trans-Baikal in June 1940. The 16th was set up and deployed in such a way that it could be transferred westwards at any moment. But it is not this army which interests us. The 17th Army is the one which compels our attention. During the Civil War, at the most dramatic moment in the blood-stained conflict to preserve the communist dictatorship, the highest number used in the designation of an army was 16. Throughout Soviet history the number 17 had never been used to designate an army. The appearance of an army bearing such a number meant that the Soviet Union, while at peace and not expecting an attack from outside, had surpassed the highest number ever reached. (Previously this number had been reached on one occasion only, for a brief period in the course of a very bitter war.)

The Soviet leaders clearly understood that in setting up a 17th Army, they were crossing a Rubicon which was not visible to the uninitiated. Even two years previously, the state could not allow itself to maintain even one formation which could have been described by the military term 'army'. Now more armies were being formed than had ever been established in the past. A critical degree in the Soviet Union's power had now been

exceeded. From then onwards, the development of the country would proceed in entirely new conditions of a kind that had never before been encountered.

The creation of the 17th Army was clearly a most highly protected state secret, and Stalin did his best to ensure that it remained a secret both within the country and abroad. The 16th and 17th Armies were formed in such a way that it was almost impossible for them to be seen by outside observers. Extra measures were taken to scotch rumours about growing Soviet military might. The order to set up the 17th Army was signed by Marshal of the Soviet Union K. S. Timoshenko on 21 June 1940. (*Order of the Peoples' Commissariat for Defence*, No. 4, point 3) The next day, Soviet radio broadcast a TASS report. Schulenberg, the German ambassador, unerringly deduced that Stalin had written it himself, and told Molotov, who did not consider it necessary to refute the suggestion.

In the TASS report, Stalin resorted to his favourite device of attributing to his opponents words which they did not use, thus allowing himself easily to 'unmask a lie':

There are rumours circulating to the effect that not just 100, not even 150 Soviet divisions are concentrated on the Lithuanian—German frontier . . .

This is pure invention by Stalin. I have checked British, French and American newspapers, which Stalin exposes here as the slanderers, and there is not one newspaper which quotes such fantastic figures. Having attributed to the Western press something it did not write, Stalin easily refuted this non-existent slander before passing on to his main point:

It is considered in responsible Soviet circles that those who are spreading these ridiculous rumours are pursuing the special aim of casting a shadow over Soviet-German relations. These gentlemen, however, are simply expressing their suppressed desires as reality. They are apparently incapable of understanding the obvious fact that the good neighbourly relations which have been established between the Soviet Union and

Germany as a result of the conclusion of the non-aggression pact cannot be shaken by any rumours or petty propaganda. (*Pravda*, 23 June 1940)

There is some truth in this report. Stalin was quite correct in saying that Soviet troops were not being concentrated on the frontier. But he passed over in silence the fact that, far from inquisitive eyes in the depth of the country, powerful formations were being set up which would one day turn up on the German frontier, also under the cover of another and equally false TASS report.

It is quite obvious that, in their mobility, their technical equipment, and their fire, strike and fighting power, the armies of the 'pre-war period' were immeasurably superior to the armies which fought in the Civil War. But this was not the only difference. Whereas the armies were then dispersed in six different directions, they were now mustered into only two. Against Japan, with whom conflicts were unceasing, there were five armies; while facing Germany and its allies, with whom peace had been signed, there were twelve.

Nor did the rapid process of setting up armies stop there. Yet another army, the 26th, was formed on July 1940 on the German border.

In the Red Army, the sequence of numbers had always been rigorously observed. The next number in the sequence should have been 18. So why was the sequence broken?

Neither Soviet marshals nor eminent communist historians give us the answer to this question. But if a close study is made of the way in which these armies were created, history itself will suggest the answer. The sequence of numbering armies had not in fact been broken; in the summer of 1940 the Soviet leadership set up another *eleven* armies, one directed at Japan, ten at Germany.

The 26th Army was formed on the German border as part of this long series, and its formation preceded that of the others. But all the other armies in the same series were in the process of being set up; at the very least, the decision had been taken to set them up. The formation of these armies was completed somewhat later than that of the 26th Army, but *before* the German invasion began.

The 23rd and 24th Armies made their secret appearances in the western military districts in May 1941. The same month, the phantom army already known to us, the 1st, came floating out of the mists. A few weeks later, another similar army, the 9th, changed from being a vague mirage into a solid reality. On 13 June 1941, the day the TASS report was transmitted, all the other phantoms came into view: the 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 24th, 25th (against Japan) and the 28th, thus completing the uninterrupted series of numbers.

Officially the formation of all these armies was completed in the first half of 1941. This, however, was only the end of the process. But where was its beginning? Communist historians conceal this, and they do so with good reason. The creation of these armies betrays Stalin's craftiness - while Hitler was the enemy, there were no armies; while Poland was being partitioned, while Soviet and German troops were facing each other, it was sufficient for Stalin to have seven to twelve armies in the west of the Soviet Union. Then Hitler turned away from Stalin, and threw the Wehrmacht into Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Holland and France, with the clear intention of landing in Britain. Hardly any German troops were left on the Soviet frontiers. It was precisely at this moment that the Soviet Union began secretly to set up an enormous number of armies, among them the 26th. The further the German divisions moved to the west, to the north, and to the south, the more Soviet armies were created against Germany. Supposing that Hitler had gone even further, and had landed his troops in Britain, had seized Gibraltar, Africa and the Near East, how many armies would Stalin have then formed on the undefended German border? And for what purpose?

The basis of Soviet strategy was the 'operation in depth' theory: the delivery of surprise strikes in great depth at the enemy's most vulnerable places. The theory of the shock army was born at the same time as the 'operation in depth' theory. The shock army was to be the instrument used to deliver those strikes in depth. Set up purely to solve offensive tasks (*Soviet Military Encyclopaedia*, Vol. I, p. 256), these shock armies had on their complement a considerable quantity of artillery and infantry whose purpose it was to break the enemy's defence, and one or two mechanized corps with 500 tanks each, which would deliver a heavy shock attack in depth.

The German *Blitzkrieg* and the Soviet operation in depth are strikingly similar in both concept and detail. Tank groups were the special instrument which had been created to carry out the *Blitzkrieg*. Three such groups were used in the invasion of France, and four in the invasion of the Soviet Union. Each one usually had between 600 and 1,000 tanks, and on occasions as many as 1,250 tanks, along with a considerable number of infantry and artillery whose purpose it was to break a way through for the tanks.

One difference between the Soviet and German war machines was that in Germany everything was called by its own name, so that the tank groups bore their own numerical designations, while the field armies had theirs. In the Soviet Union shock armies existed only in theory; and although that theory was soon turned into substance, they still did not formally bear the title of shock army. This name was officially introduced only after the Germans had invaded. Before this, all Soviet armies had a single numerical designation, and bore no distinguishing name. This was misleading then, and is misleading now. In Germany we can see the engines of aggression, the tank groups, clearly called by their own names. In the Red Army, we do not see them quite so distinctly. This is not evidence of great peaceableness, however, but rather of excessive secretiveness.

At first sight, Soviet armies are like soldiers in a row. They all look the same. If one takes a closer look, however, the differences quickly emerge. For some months before the 'Finnish aggression' occurred, several armies intended for the 'liberation' of Finland were deployed on Soviet territory. This is how they were made up in December 1939, in the order in which they were deployed from north to south:

14th Army — no corps, two rifle divisions

9th Army — no corps, three rifle divisions

8th Army — no corps, four rifle divisions

7th Army — 10th Tank Corps (660 tanks); three tank brigades (each with 330 tanks); the 10th, 19th, 34th and 50th Rifle Corps (each with three rifle divisions); a detached brigade: eleven detached artillery regiments, apart from those which form part of the complement of the corps and divisions of this army; several detached tank and artillery battalions; and the army's air arm.

We can therefore see that although the 7th Army did not differ in name from its neighbours, it had several times more tanks and artillery than the three other armies put together. In addition, the 7th Army was commanded by K. A. Meretskov, the commander of the Leningrad Military District. A favourite of Stalin's,

Meretskov was shortly to be appointed Chief of the General Staff and later promoted to Marshal of the Soviet Union. Nor was he the only future marshal in the 7th Army. This army was staffed by the most promising officers, who had held senior appointments already and who were to rise even higher in future. L. A. Govorov, for example, the Chief of the Artillery Staff of the 7th Army, also went on to become Marshal of the Soviet Union. The other armies, on the other hand, were led by commanders who had not been prominent in the past, nor would they become so in the future.

The position of the 7th (shock) Army was interesting. The Finnish 'militarists' began their armed 'provocations' precisely in that area where the Soviet High Command, a few months earlier, had deployed the 7th Army, which was thus able to deliver a blow in response. For some curious reason, the Finnish 'militarists' did not stage any provocations in those areas where weak Soviet armies had been deployed.

Soviet organization was extremely flexible. Any army could become a shock army at any time, simply by adding a corps or more to its complement, and translated just as quickly back to its normal state. From being the strongest army in 1940, the 7th Army had by 1941 become the weakest; it no longer had any corps, and consisted of four rifle divisions only.

In order to understand what had been taking place on the Soviet-German frontier, we must make a clear definition of which were shock armies and which were ordinary ones. Officially all armies were the same, and none was called a shock army. Yet some armies had hardly any tanks, while other armies had hundreds of them. In order to identify shock armies, we should make an elementary comparison of the strike power of the Soviet armies with the German tank groups, and with the Soviet pre-war criteria used to define what a shock army was. The element needed to change an ordinary army into a shock one was a mechanized corps organized in a new way, with an establishment of 1,031 tanks. When one such corps was included in an ordinary army, its strike power would become comparable to that of any German tank group, or even exceed it.

Here is a striking revelation. On 21 June 1941, *all* the Soviet armies on the German and Romanian borders, as well as the 23rd Army on the Finnish frontier, were of shock army standard, although, as we have already seen, they were not called such. They were, from north to south, the 23rd, 8th, 11th, 3rd, 10th, 4th, 5th, 6th, 26th, 12th, 18th and 9th. The 16th Army was then added to them. This was a typical shock army, with more than 1,000 tanks on its complement. (Central Archives of the Ministry of Defence of the USSR, Archive No.

208, list 2511, item 20, p. 128) The 19th, 20th, and 21st Armies, which had been secretly moved up to the German border, had already been fully brought up to this standard.

Germany had a powerful engine for aggression in its tank groups. The Soviet Union had a similar engine. The difference lay in their designations and in their numbers. Hitler had four tank groups, while Stalin had sixteen shock armies.

Not all mechanized corps were made up entirely of tanks. But to appreciate Stalin's intentions fully, account must be taken both of what he achieved, and also of what he was prevented from achieving. The German attack caught the Soviet Union in the process of setting up a great number of shock armies. First came the framework for these enormous structures, which was then filled in, completed, and finally put into working order. Not all armies reached the levels planned for them, but this work was proceeding when Hitler interrupted it. He had enough sense not to wait until they were all ready to be turned loose.

Soviet experts at one time used the term 'invasion army'. This term did not have a particularly diplomatic ring, especially for the neighbouring countries with whom Soviet diplomats were doing their best to have 'normal relations'. In the 1930s, this excessively frank term was replaced by the happier-sounding expression 'shock army'. Soviet sources, however, stress that these are one and the same thing. (*VIZH*, 1963, No. 10, p. 31)

But even the term 'shock army', for purposes of disguise, was not used until the war began, even though the greater part of the Soviet Army deserved this title. The Soviet generals then introduced the term 'cover army' to conceal their designs. There are other such terms in communist double-speak. Soviet expressions like 'liberation campaign', 'counter-attack', 'seize the strategic initiative' mean respectively aggression, attack, and beginning a surprise war without declaring it. It is a great pity that some historians, either through ignorance or design, use Soviet military terms without explaining their true meaning to their readers.

The true purpose of a Soviet 'cover army' was to conceal that, in the initial period of a war, the Red Army was fully mobilizing its main forces, deploying them, and then entering the war. 'Cover', however, in no way

meant defence. As early as 20 April 1932 the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR laid down that powerful mobile invasion groups should be kept near state borders in peacetime, to enable them to cross the frontier immediately war broke out, in order to disrupt the enemy's mobilization and seize strategic reserves and important areas. In the view of the Soviet Union's top military and political leaders, these actions would be the best cover for Soviet mobilization. It was precisely in this sense that the armies in frontier areas were called 'cover armies'.

July 1939 was the time when theory was put into practice, and the creation of 'cover armies' began on the Soviet western frontiers. Stalin was using the Molotov—Ribbentrop Pact to push Hitler into a war with the West, to establish a common frontier with Germany, and to form an increasing number of these 'cover armies'.

Among the ordinary Soviet invasion armies, which usually consisted of one mechanized corps, two rifle corps, and some detached divisions, were some armies that did not conform to the general pattern. There were three of them, the 6th, 9th and 10th. These armies together had not three corps, but six. Two were mechanized, one was cavalry, and three were rifle. Each of these armies was moved as close as possible to the frontier, so that if a large salient developed on the enemy side, the special armies would find themselves precisely in these salients. Each army was equipped with the latest weaponry. The 6th Mechanized Corps of the 10th Army, for instance, was armed with 452 of the latest T-34 and KV tanks. The 4th Mechanized Corps of the 6th Army, had 460 of the latest T-34 and KV tanks, besides others. The air divisions of these armies had hundreds of the latest planes, including the YAK-1, MIG-3, IL-2, and PE-2.

After each army had been fully equipped, it must have had 2,350 tanks, 698 armoured vehicles, over 4,000 guns and mortars and more than 250,000 soldiers and officers. In addition to their basic complements, these armies were given ten to twelve heavy artillery regiments, NKVD units and much else besides.

I do not know what to call these out-of-the-ordinary armies. If we use their official names, the 6th Army, the 9th, and the 10th, then we involuntarily fall into the trap which was set as long ago as 1939 by the Soviet General Staff. We lose our awareness and begin to think of these armies as ordinary shock armies, or ordinary invasion armies. They were completely out of the ordinary; each one of these armies, with more than 2,000 tanks each, was equal to or even exceeded one half of the entire German Wehrmacht, while in quality the superiority of the Soviet tanks was astonishing.

If we call the German tank groups, each with between 600 and 1,000 tanks, engines of aggression, what then are we to call the 6th, 9th, and 10th Soviet Armies?

That was not all, however. The Soviet High Command had a fair number of corps at its disposal which did not belong to these armies, but which were deployed quite close to the frontier. Any ordinary army could be changed into a shock one just by including corps in its complement, and any shock army could be changed into a heavy shock one without changing either its name or number.

Of the three heavy shock armies, it is the most powerful of them, the 9th, which attracts our attention. Not very long before, in the Winter War against Finland, the 9th Army was simply a rifle corps consisting of three rifle divisions with a fine-sounding name. After the Winter War, the 9th Army dissolved into the mists, appeared elsewhere, was dissolved once again, only to turn up yet again under cover of the TASS report of 13 June 1941. It had not yet been brought up to full strength, but was still the unfinished shell for the most powerful army in the world. It had six corps, two of which were mechanized, and one cavalry.

On 21 June 1941, the 9th Army had 17 divisions in all, including two air, four tank, two motorized, two cavalry and seven rifle. It was very similar to other heavy shock armies, but it was planned to add to the 9th Army yet another mechanized corps, the 2yth, commanded by Major-General I. E. Petrov. This corps was established in the Turkestan Military District, and was secretly transferred westwards before its formation had been fully completed. After it had been included, the Army's complement consisted of 20 divisions, including six tank. At full strength, the seven corps of the 9th Army had 3,341 tanks. This was roughly the same number as the Wehrmacht had; in quality, they were superior. According to Colonel-General P. Belov (at that time he was a major-general, commander of the 2nd Cavalry Corps of the 9th Army), it was intended to give T-34 tanks even to the cavalry of this army. (*VIZH*, 1959, No. u, p. 66)

The 9th Army had so far had undistinguished commanders. Then everything changed. The 9th Army was given a colonel-general as its commander. It was an exceptionally high rank at the time. There were only eight colonel-generals in the whole of the armed forces of the Soviet Union, while the tank troops had none, the air arms had none, and the NKVD had none. Thirty Soviet armies were led by major-generals and lieutenant-generals. The 9th Army was the only exception. In addition, some very bright generals and officers had joined this exceptional army, including three future marshals of the Soviet Union, R. Ya Malinovsky, M. V. Zakharov, and N. I. Krylov; A. Poryshkin, a future air marshal and three times Hero of the Soviet Union; and I. E. Petrov,

I. G. Pavlovsky, P. N. Lashchenko, all future full generals of the Army. Many other talented and aggressive commanders, who had already distinguished themselves in battle, joined, including the 28-year-old Air Major-General A. Osipnenko. There is no escaping the impression that somebody's solicitous hand was selecting everything which was best and most promising for this unusual army.

Here we come to a small but significant discovery. The most powerful army in the world was set up in the Soviet Union in the first half of June 1941. It was not set up on the German frontier, but on the border of Romania. After its first disappearance, the 9th Army had suddenly turned up in June 1940 on the Romanian frontier. By this stage, it had already assumed its new capacity as a real shock army. It was soon to participate in the 'liberation' of Bessarabia; Soviet sources indicate that 'the 9th Army was created specially to solve this important problem'. (*VIZH*, 1972, No. 10, p. 83)

The training of the army had been accomplished by the most aggressive of Soviet commanders, K. K. Rokossovsky, who by then had been released from prison. The 9th Army became part of the Southern Front as the key lead army, playing the same role as the 7th Army had done in Finland. The Front was under Zhukov's personal command.

After the brief 'liberation campaign', the 9th Army disappeared again. Then, under cover of the TASS report of 13 June 1941, it turned up again in the same place. By now, though, it was no longer simply a shock invasion army. It had become a heavy shock army, and was on the way to becoming the most powerful army in the world. Its purpose can hardly have been defensive, for there were very few troops on the Romanian side of the frontier. Even if there had been, no aggressor would have delivered his main strike through Romania, for the most elementary geographical reasons. Another 'liberation campaign' by the 9th Army into Romania, however, could have changed the entire strategic balance in Europe and in the world. Romania was Germany's basic source of oil. A strike at Romania would ground all Germany's aircraft, and bring all its tanks, machines, ships, industry and transport to a halt.

That is why the most promising commanders were to be found there. The 9th Army suddenly appeared on the Romanian frontier in the middle of June 1941. But this suddenness was only for the benefit of outside observers; in fact, the 9th Army had never left the area since 'liberating' Bessarabia in the middle of 1940. It was simply that its name had not been used officially for some time, and orders had gone directly to the corps from the headquarters of the Military District. The headquarters of the 9th Army and the headquarters of the

Odessa Military District (established in October 1939) simply merged into one entity and then equally simply separated again on 13 June.

Experience shows that, after a shock army appears on the borders of a small country, an order to 'liberate' the neighbour's territory is sure to follow within the month. Irrespective of how events might have unfolded had Soviet troops invaded Germany (which incidentally was just as unprepared for defence as the Soviet Union was), the outcome of the war could have been decided far from the main battlefields. Stalin was clearly counting on this. That was why the 9th Army was the strongest. That was why, as early as March 1941, at a time when the 9th Army officially still did not exist, there arrived there a youngish, highly audacious major-general named Radion Yakovlevich Malinovsky. This was the same Malinovsky who four years later was to astonish the world with the tremendous strike he delivered across hills and wilderness into the vast heartland of Manchuria.

In 1941 the task facing Malinovsky and his colleagues in the 9th Army was a fairly simple one. They were faced with a distance of only 180 kilometres to traverse, as opposed to 810 kilometres in Manchuria; not across hills and wilderness, but across a plain with really good roads. The attack had to be made, not against the Japanese Army, but against the considerably weaker Romanian one. What is more, it was planned to give the 9th Army three times more tanks than the 6th Guards Tank Army would have in 1945.

Hitler allowed none of this to happen. A German government statement handed over to the Soviet government on the outbreak of war in the East gives the reasons for Germany's action. One of these reasons was that Soviet troops were being concentrated unjustifiably on the frontier with Romania, and that this represented a mortal danger for Germany. None of this has been invented by Goebbels's propaganda. The 9th (heavy shock) Army had been established exclusively as an offensive army. According to evidence from Colonel-General P. Belov, the 9th Army usually 'regarded every defensive problem as short-term, even after German operations had begun on Soviet territory'. (*VIZH*, 1959, No. n, p. 65) But then this was the trouble with not just the 9th Army, but with all the other armies as well.

Three times Hero of the Soviet Union, Marshal of the Air Force A. I. Pokryshkin (then a senior lieutenant and deputy commander of a fighter squadron belonging to the 9th Army) sheds an interesting light on the 9th Army's mood. Here is his conversation with a 'filthy bourgeois', whose shop had been confiscated by his 'liberators'. The scene takes place in the spring of 1941, in 'liberated' Bessarabia:

'Ah, Bucharest! You should see what a fine city it is.'

'I'll certainly see it sometime,' I answered with conviction.

The shop-owner opened his eyes wide, waiting for me to go on. I had to change the subject.

(A. I. Pokryshkin: *Nebo voiny*, Novosibirsk ZSKI, 1968, p. 10)

We have a natural reluctance to believe Hitler's explanation that he launched Operation Barbarossa to defend Germany from a treacherous attack by Soviet troops on Bucharest and Ploesti. But the other side says the same thing; even the Soviet lieutenants knew that they would shortly be in Romania. A Soviet officer is not entitled to wander across frontiers as a tourist. In what capacity could Pokryshkin get there except as a 'liberator'? Hitler did everything he could to prevent this, but all he succeeded in doing was briefly to delay the inevitable.

CHAPTER 17

Mountain Divisions on the Steppes of the Ukraine

Airborne assault landings will be effective in mountainous battle areas. Since troops, headquarters and organs which operate in the rear are particularly reliant on roads, it is possible to use air assaults to capture enemy troops operating in the rear, to attack his communications and roads, commanding heights, ravines, passes, railway junctions and so on, and this can produce exceptionally important results. In general terms, the dropping of an assault landing force will hardly be expedient outside the framework of an offensive operation.

(Voennyi Vestnik, 1940, No. 4, pp. 76-77)

A study of the Soviet armies in the First Strategic Echelon reveals a surprising picture of the Soviet Union preparing itself painstakingly and tirelessly for war. We may be surprised to discover that each army had its own unique structure, its own peculiarities, and its own character. Each 'cover' army was established to deal with a clearly defined task in the forthcoming war of 'liberation'.

Sufficient material has been published to provide for a separate study to be written on each of the 30 Soviet armies. If a study in depth were to be made of the structure, disposition, officer corps and the direction given to the training in only one Soviet army, and it does not really matter which one, then the aggressive tendency inherent in all the Soviet preparations would become quite obvious.

As there is no space available to describe all 30 armies, I shall allow myself to dwell briefly upon one of them. Officially it was called the 12th Army. It had one mechanized and two rifle corps and other units. It had

nine divisions in all including two tank and one motorized. It was indistinguishable in number, name and composition from other similar invasion armies. Its history is the usual one. It was set up when the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed. A few weeks after it was formed, it set to work, and 'liberated' Poland. It then had a tank corps, two detached tank brigades, two cavalry corps, and three rifle divisions. It was not without purpose that it had little artillery and infantry. There was no need here to break through a powerful defence. But on the other hand there were mobile troops. 'The I2th Army . . . is in essence a front-line mobile group.' (SVE, Vol. 8, p. 181)

Its subsequent history was also normal. It completed the 'liberation' campaign in Poland, but then for some reason or other the army was not disbanded, and it stayed on the German border. For what purpose? It is said that Stalin was naive and believed Hitler. Why then did he not disband his armies, which had been set up for the event of war?

Later the 12th Army underwent the same transformation as all the adjacent invasion armies. Its main strike engine was no longer called a tank corps, but a mechanized corps. This was so that the leaders of neighbouring friendly countries should not become uneasy. The change of name, it is true, was followed by an increase rather than a decrease in the number of tanks in the army. The cavalry was taken away from it. Its capacity for disrupting the enemy's defences was increased. The number of rifle divisions was doubled, as was the amount of artillery in each division. In addition to these, one artillery brigade and four detached artillery regiments were added to the army's complement. The capability to counter the enemy's engineered defences also increased when a detached regiment of engineers was brought into the army.

What was unusual about the I2th Army was its national composition. When he was preparing to invade Poland in 1939, Stalin filled the I2th Army with Ukrainians, apparently bearing in mind the long-standing animosity between the Poles and the Ukrainians. The army was headed by S. K. Timoshenko, and we find a multitude of commanders of Ukrainian origin alongside him. The army was formed in the Ukraine. It follows that the reservists were also drawn from there, and they formed a solid majority in the I2th Army.

After Poland had been 'liberated', a slow and almost imperceptible change in the I2th Army's national composition began. Far-reaching changes had already taken place in 1940. In order that this army's unusual national composition did not become too apparent, ethnic Russians were appointed to key posts. The greater part of the army, however, was neither Ukrainian nor Russian. It had become Caucasian. There were

Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaijanis in other armies, but their presence was particularly strong in the I2th. There were hundreds of officers' surnames like Partsvaniya, Grigoryan, Kabalava, Gusein-zade and Sarkoshyan. Such officers were not only to be found at command level in companies and battalions. General Zhukov, who commanded the Military District, sought out Colonel I. Kh. Bagramyan, another Armenian who was a friend of long standing, from his job as a military academy lecturer, and appointed him Chief of the Operations Branch (War Planning), not of any old headquarters, but to none other than the headquarters of the I2th Army. Not only the colonels, but quite a few generals, such as Bagrat Arashunyan, the army's chief of staff, now came from the Caucasus.

Zhukov was a frequent visitor to the I2th Army, and it was not without purpose that he was gathering natives of the Caucasus into its ranks. The I2th was being secretly but steadily changed into a mountain army. Zhukov personally demanded of its command that the I2th should have a thorough knowledge of the Carpathian passes, not just on paper, but from practical experience. In 1940, he ordered that 'specially reinforced groups, made up of various combat vehicles and means of transport, should be sent through the passes in autumn along all more or less passable routes, in order to be convinced they could be surmounted in practical conditions by tanks, motor vehicles, tractors, animal-drawn transport and beasts of burden.' (Marshal I. Kh. Bagramyan, *VIZH* 1967, No. I, p. 54)

Hitler was waging war in France, with Germany's back exposed to the Soviet Union. Yet here was Zhukov carrying out experiments in how to master mountain passes. Zhukov was, of course, unaware that the German generals had only recently been carrying out exactly the same experiments in order to reassure themselves that troops, tanks, artillery tractors and transport could pass through the Ardennes. But it was not defence that Zhukov had in mind when preparing the I2th Army. Bagramyan, who was responsible for the war plans, recalled that 'When I was studying the operational plans, I was struck by the following fact - our frontier army had neither a deployment nor cover plan for the frontier.' (*VIZH*, 1967, No. I, p. 52)

'When I was studying the operational plans' means that the safe of the operations branch of the I2th Army was not empty. There were plans inside it. They were not there simply to be familiarized with in a cursory manner. They were complex documents which had to be studied. Yet among these war plans there were none for defence.

There is an interesting description of the 12th Army exercises, which Zhukov attended in person. The problems were all offensive in character, and on the maps the war took place on German territory. The war game was being played against the real enemy, and not some fictitious one, using real top-secret intelligence information; and it began with Soviet troops fording the frontier river San. Differences arose between Zhukov and Parusinov, the officer commanding the army. These were not as to whether to advance or to stand and put up a defence. 'We must do our best,' insisted Parusinov, 'to inflict maximum casualties on the enemy with our first strike.' The wise Zhukov understood that these were good intentions, but a strike had to be made, not on a wide front, but on a very narrow one. That was what the argument was about.

Having demolished the army's commanding officer in military theory, Zhukov did not stop there. Parusinov was shortly afterwards removed from the command of the army, and his place was taken by Zhukov's old friend, General P. G. Ponedelin.

After these changes, the experiments in how to master the mountain passes continued. They were conducted by Bagramyan in person. It was during these experiments that he supervised an 'obvious display of defensive works'; in other words, the construction, in clear view of the enemy, of reinforced concrete fortifications right on the bank of the frontier river.

Zhukov's interest in the passes is highly significant. If his purpose had been to render them impassable to the enemy, he would have thrown his troops into the mountains, dug up all mountain paths and roads, and built reinforced concrete fortifications near the passes, instead of right alongside the river. It would have been more economical, the enemy would not have observed the construction work, and would have been unable to cross the passes. But would anyone really attack the Soviet Union across mountain ranges when there were open spaces in abundance? Mountains were of exceptional importance to the Soviet command. Germany, on the other hand, was separated from its main source of oil by a double barrier of mountains, in Czechoslovakia and Romania. A Soviet strike across the passes in Czechoslovakia and Romania would effectively cut the oil artery.

According to Marshal Zhukov, 'Germany's weak point was oil supply, but it made up for this to some extent by importing oil from Romania.' (G. K. Zhukov, *Vospominaniya i razmyshleniya*, Moscow APN, 1969, p. 224) Everything was simple, but of genius. That Zhukov never suffered one defeat in his whole life was due to his invariably following one simple principle -find the enemy's weak spot, and then hit it with a sudden strike.

The reason why these experiments were going on in the mountains was because Zhukov knew Germany's weak spot. The capabilities of troops of all kinds, and every type of combat and transport vehicle operating in the conditions which prevailed in the Carpathian mountain passes, were subjected to a scientific study. Standards were established and carefully checked, and guidance was compiled for the troops. The time taken by the various types of vehicle to negotiate these mountain passes was carefully recorded and analysed. All this was very necessary for the planning of offensive operations; especially lightning operations. Just as in planning a bank robbery, it was essential to take into account every tiny detail, and to calculate everything with the greatest accuracy. All of this, it should be noted, was totally unnecessary for defence. If the Carpathian passes had to be defended from the enemy, then speed was not needed; all the soldiers had to be told was to stay where they were and not let the enemy pass.

Events went on apace. Zhukov was promoted, as was Bagramyan in his wake. But neither of them forgot the 12th Army. Slowly and unceasingly, its structure was changing under their orders.

As we have already noted, in the 12th Army, as in all other Soviet armies, things were not called by their names at this time. At the beginning of June 1941, four rifle divisions (the 44th, 58th, 60th, and 96th) were converted into mountain rifle divisions. In addition, the recently formed 192nd Mountain Rifle Division was secretly transferred from Turkestan and added to the complement of the 12th Army. What does one call a corps which has two divisions, each of them mountain rifle? What does one call another corps, in which, of its four divisions, three are mountain rifle? What does one call an army which, out of its three corps, has two which are in essence mountain rifle corps, and in which the mountain rifle divisions are in a solid majority? I should call the corps mountain rifle, and the army a mountain army. The Soviet High Command, however, had reasons for not doing this. The corps went on being called, as before, the 13th and 17th Rifle Corps, while the army was simply called the 12th Army.

Here we see only the final results of the reorganization; how it was done is hidden from us. We only know that the mountain rifle divisions were given their official name on 1 June 1941, while the order was issued on 26 April; and that the transformation of the divisions from rifle into mountain rifle divisions was going on as

early as autumn 1940, even before Bagramyan had begun his experiments. Not only was it changed into a mountain army, the 12th also had an influence on adjacent armies. The 72nd Mountain Rifle Division, under the command of Major-General P. I. Abramidze, had been trained in the 12th Army, and was now transferred to the adjacent 26th Army.

Lieutenant-General I. S. Konev's 19th Army, which was being transferred from the northern Caucasus, was then secretly deployed behind the 12th and 26th Armies. We also find mountain rifle divisions on its complement, for instance the 28th Division under the command of Colonel K. I. Novik. It was at this time, again under cover of the T ASS report of 13 June 1941, that deployment began in the area between the 12th (mountain) and 9th (heavy shock) Armies in the eastern Carpathians, of yet another army, the 18th. Hitler did not allow its deployment to be completed, however, and we are unable to establish with any degree of accuracy the shape which the Soviet High Command wanted it to take. Hitler threw all the Soviet plans into disarray and then something quite unimaginable began. But even so, there are sufficient documents to enable the conclusion to be drawn that the original idea was that the 18th Army should be a carbon copy of the 12th (Mountain) Army, although like the 12th, it did not bear this name. Any researcher who studies the archives of the 12th and 18th Armies will be surprised by their absolute similarity in structure. It is a most unusual example of twin armies. The similarity went as far as the same Caucasian general running the headquarters of both the 18th and the 12th Armies in a completely even-handed way. He was Major-General (later full General of the Army) V. Ya. Kolpakchi.

Just before the war began, a school for mountain training was opened in the Caucasus. It trained the best Soviet mountain climbers to be instructors. Once fully trained, these instructors were sent to the Soviet western frontier, since it was precisely here, and not in the Caucasus or Turkestan, that in June 1941 a great number of mountain rifle troops were concentrated. A short article about the school appeared in the newspaper *Red Star* on 1 November 1941, under the heading 'Trained to Fight in the Mountains'.

It is now time to ask the question-in *which* mountains? There is only one comparatively small mountain range on the Soviet western frontiers. This is the eastern Carpathian mass, the heights of which are more like gently sloping hills than mountains. There would have been no point in having a powerful defence in the Carpathians in 1941, for the following reasons:

1. That area of the Carpathians would not favour an aggressor coming from west to east. The enemy would come down from the mountains on to the plain, and so his army would have to be supplied across the whole of the Carpathians, the Tatry mountains, the Ruda and Sudety hills and the Alps. All this is highly unfavourable and dangerous for an aggressor.
2. The eastern Carpathians form a blunt wedge on the enemy's side of the frontier. If many Soviet troops were to be concentrated here, for defensive purposes, even in peacetime they would be surrounded by the enemy on three sides. By making use of the plains further to the south, and especially more to the north of the eastern Carpathians, the enemy could strike at any time at the rest of the troops which had dug themselves in on the mountains, thereby cutting their supply-lines.
3. In 1941, there were insufficient enemy troops in the Carpathians to carry out an aggression, and the Soviet High Command was fully aware of this. (See for example Lieutenant-General Bagrat Arushunyan, VIZH 1973, No. 6, p. 61)

All these factors, which render the eastern Carpathians unfavourable for an aggressive action moving from west to east, make them suitable for an aggression which moves in the opposite direction:

1. As the troops move ahead into the mountains, their supply-lines remain on Soviet territory, mainly lying across very flat terrain.
2. The eastern Carpathians form a blunt salient which juts far out into the west, thereby cutting the enemy grouping in two. This is a natural springboard which, if heavy forces are built up in it even in peacetime, places them as though they were in the enemy's rear. All they then have to do is to continue to move forward, threatening the enemy's rear and thus compelling him to withdraw along the whole front.
3. Only negligible enemy forces were located in the Carpathians. The Soviet High Command knew this, and it was precisely for this reason that they had concentrated two armies there.

The two armies could not stay on the spot; there was no room for them. They were not needed for defence, nor were they adapted to it. There was only one way of using these armies in war, and that was to move them forward. Two mountain ridges spread from the eastern Carpathians. One goes westwards to Czechoslovakia, the other southwards to Romania. Two directions, two armies; it is entirely logical. Each direction was equally

important, for each led to the main oil pipelines. If only one of the armies succeeded, it would still be fatal for Germany. Even in the event of both armies failing, their operations would lessen the flow of German reserves into Romania.

Apart from the two strikes over the mountains at the arteries, there was also the 9th (heavy shock) Army, which was ready to deliver a blow to the heart of the oilfields. Its operations were covered by two main mountain ranges. In order to defend Romania from the Soviet 9th Army, German troops would have had to take these ranges, with an entire Soviet army on each one.

We may disagree over the purposes of the mountain rifle divisions which made up the 12th and 18th Armies, yet these armies were in the Carpathians. But we cannot argue about the purpose of a similar division in the 9th (heavy shock) Army. The 9th was stationed near Odessa, but on the orders of General Zhukov, who bore personal responsibility for both the South and South-Western Fronts, a mountain rifle division was set up as part of the 9th Army. What sort of mountains are to be found near Odessa? The 30th Irkutsk, Order of Lenin, Triple Order of the Red Banner, Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR Mountain Rifle Division of the 9th Army could only have been used for its primary purpose in Romania. It was certainly not by chance that this division, commanded by Major-General S. G. Galaktionov, found itself in the 48th Rifle Corps of General P. Ya. Malinovsky. First of all, Malinovsky was the most aggressive corps commander not just in the 9th Army but on the whole of the Southern Front. On the other hand, the 48th Rifle Corps was on the extreme right flank of the 9th Army. This was of no significance on Soviet territory. But if the 9th Army was moved into Romania, it would be wholly on the plain, and its right flank would be rubbing against the mountain range. It was therefore eminently reasonable to have one mountain rifle division on the extreme right flank.

That was not all. The 21st Mountain Cavalry Division, commanded by Colonel Ya. K. Kuliev, was secretly moved out of Turkestan in military trains. Hitler's attack upset everything, however, and it then became necessary to throw all the forces which had been destined for the south into Byelorussia, including the 19th Army with its mountain rifle divisions. The 21st Mountain Cavalry Division also found itself there. Nobody there needed it; it was not adapted to fighting in the marshlands, and there it ingloriously perished. But it was not for Byelorussia that it had been intended.

The concentration of two Soviet armies in the eastern Carpathians had catastrophic consequences. No one, of course, would have attacked these armies head-on. But the 1st German Tank Group's attack at Rovno put

the Soviet command in a dilemma. They either had to leave the two armies in the Carpathians, where they would perish without ammunition and provisions, or else to withdraw them at once from this mousetrap. The second of these choices was adopted. The two mountain armies, which were unadapted for fighting on the plains, carrying light armament and a mass of equipment which was now redundant, fled from the mountains and immediately came under attack from the spearhead of German tanks. The 1st Tank Group easily routed the fleeing mountain armies and then drove forward to catch the 9th (heavy shock) Army in the rear.

Once again, let Bagramyan speak:

Knowledge of the Eastern Carpathians led to a more clear understanding of how absolutely essential it was to reform as quickly as possible those heavy unwieldy rifle divisions, which were unsuited for action in the mountains, into light mountain rifle units. When I recall this now, I catch myself thinking of how unintentionally mistaken I had been. At the outbreak of war, these divisions in the main had to fight their battles in the conditions prevailing on the plains, so their reformation into mountain divisions only served to weaken them. (Marshal Bagramyan, *VIZH*, 1976, No. I, p. 55)

Once the German troops had dealt with these armies, the road opened out before them to the totally undefended bases of the Soviet Fleet, to the Don Basin, Khar'kov, Zaporozh'e and Dniepropetrovsk. These were industrial regions of the utmost importance; once they were lost to the Germans, the Soviet Union succeeded in producing only 100,000 tanks for the rest of the war years. This was much more than was produced in Germany, but had these regions not been lost, Soviet tank, artillery, aircraft and naval production could have been several times higher than their already record levels.

When the Germans broke through to the south of the Ukraine it put the Soviet troops around Kiev in a very serious position and opened the road for Germany to the Caucasus - the heart of the Soviet Union's oil-production.

Communist propaganda has it that the Red Army was not preparing itself for war, and that this was the cause of all its subsequent troubles. This is not true. Let us retrace, if only through the examples offered by the 12th Army and its carbon copy, the 18th, what *could* have happened if the Soviet Union had really been unprepared for war:

1. There would have been enormous savings of those resources which were simply wasted on setting up two mountain armies and many detached mountain rifle divisions. If only part of these resources had been used to establish anti-tank divisions, the war would have taken a different course.
2. There would not have been two armies in the Carpathians; they would not have had to be extricated in a panic from this mousetrap; nor would they have fallen under the blow from the German spearhead as they were withdrawing.
3. The German massed tanks to the north of the Carpathians would have met with heavyweight divisions adapted to fighting on the plains and equipped with anti-tank guns and many other types of powerful artillery, instead of the light divisions they actually encountered fleeing from the mountains.
4. If the German tank spearhead had broken through the defences of these divisions which were not fleeing anywhere, the consequences would not have been catastrophic, for the enormous build-up of troops on the Romanian frontier would not have been there, and the German strike would have simply landed in an empty space, instead of into the rear area of these troops.

If the Red Army had not been preparing for war, everything would have been different. But it was preparing itself, and very assiduously at that.

CHAPTER 18

The Purpose of the First Strategic Echelon

It has to be borne in mind that it is possible simultaneously to carry out two or even three offensive operations on different fronts in a theatre of military actions, with the intention of strategically rocking the enemy's defensive capability on the widest possible scale.

Marshal S. K. TIMOSHENKO,
People's Commissar for Defence of
the USSR, 31 December 1940

We have dwelt very briefly on some of the armies belonging to the First Strategic Echelon. We saw the most powerful of these armies on the Romanian frontier. We saw the mountain armies destined to cut off Romania — and its oil — from Germany. We saw five airborne assault corps and a special corps for amphibious assault operations. The First Strategic Echelon of the Red Army had in all sixteen armies and several dozen detached corps. There was a total of 170 divisions in this strategic echelon.

Interestingly, Soviet marshals were discussing the role of this echelon *before* the war. Marshal A. I. Egorov considered that the forthcoming war would be one in which millions, and indeed tens of millions of soldiers would take part. But he propounded that an offensive should be embarked upon without waiting until full mobilization had been carried through. It was his opinion that in peacetime it was essential to maintain 'invasion groups' in frontier districts, so that these groups could cross the state frontier on the first day of the war, thus disrupting the enemy's mobilization while at the same time covering that of the Soviets. (Report of the Chief of Staff of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army to the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR, 20 April 1932)

Marshal M. N. Tukhachevsky did not agree with this. In his view, what was needed was not 'invasion groups' but 'invasion armies'. Tukhachevsky insisted that

the opportunity to cross the border immediately, along with the declaration of mobilization, must in the first instance dictate the composition of the forward army and the disposition of its troops . . . Mechanized corps must be stationed some 50-70 kilometres from the frontiers, so as to be able to cross the border from the first day of mobilization. (M. N. Tukhachevsky: *Izbrannyye Proizvedeniya*, Moscow Voenizdat 1964, Vol. 2, p. 219)

Tukhachevsky and Egorov were of course mistaken. They had to be shot, and the authoritative, inflexible and invincible General G. K. Zhukov rose to the summit of military power. Least of all was he disposed to abstract thought. He was a practical man who had never lost a military battle in his entire lifetime. In August 1939, Zhukov carried out an operation, staggering in its suddenness and daring, to inflict a crushing defeat on the Japanese 6th Army. (This same method was later to be adapted against the German 6th Army at Stalingrad.) This lightning rout of the Japanese was the prologue to World War II. When Stalin had received Zhukov's telegram of 19 August 1939 reporting that he had achieved his main objective of preparing an attack without the Japanese even suspecting that he had done so, Stalin gave his agreement to the establishment of a common frontier with Germany. It was after this that the destruction of the western defences began, and the large shock formations began to be set up. The Kiev Military District, which was the most important and most powerful of all Soviet military districts, was placed under Zhukov's command. Zhukov was then promoted even higher, to the post of Chief of the General Staff. It was at this point that the General Staff reached a theoretical conclusion of exceptional importance: *'It is necessary to place the execution of the invasion armies' tasks on the whole of the First Strategic Echelon.'* (VIZH 1963, No. 10, p. 31) Thus all sixteen armies of the first Echelon, which contained 170 divisions, were earmarked for invasion.

Not only had the First Strategic Echelon been given the task of carrying out invasion action, but it had actually begun to carry it out. Covered yet again by the TASS report of 13 June 1941, the entire First Strategic Echelon had moved up to the German and Romanian frontiers. Although at this stage there were

only about three million soldiers and officers, the power of the First Strategic Echelon grew swiftly. Marshal S. K. Kurkotkin remembered that 'military units which had left for the state frontier before the war, had taken away with them emergency reserve supplies of uniforms and footwear'. (*Tyl SVS V Velikoi Orechestvennoi Voyny*, Moscow Voenizdat 1977, p. 216) The Marshal states that practically no uniforms or footwear remained in the reserves at the centre. This means that divisions, corps and armies took with them clothing and footwear for millions of reservists. What calculation did they have in mind, apart from an immediate call-up of millions of men?

When speaking of the power of the First Strategic Echelon, mention must not be confined only to how many soldiers it had. A thought must also be spared for the millions whom Hitler did not allow to be called up, clothed and shod close to the frontiers. It was not planned that this awesomely powerful movement of the First Strategic Echelon should come to a halt near the German frontier. That was why Soviet units of the NKVD began to cut the barbed wire on the frontiers on 20 June 1941. The German Army, however, had begun to cut its wire the week before.

CHAPTER 19

Stalin in May

In the fields of foreign policy, Stalin has set himself an objective of the utmost importance, which he hopes to attain by his own efforts.

Count VON DER SCHULENBURG (secret
dispatch dated 12 May 1941)

In order to understand what happened in June 1941, we must inevitably look back to the month of May. It is the most mysterious month in the whole of Soviet history. Every day, every hour of that month is filled with events, the meaning of which can still only be guessed at. Even those events which took place in the full view of a watching world have still not been fully explained by anyone.

On 6 May 1941, Stalin became the head of the Soviet government. This move puzzled many people. We know, for example, from captured German documents that the German leaders were likewise unable to find a satisfactory explanation for this event. For the first time in Soviet history, the supreme authority of the Party and that of the government had been officially placed in the same hands. This did not mean that Stalin's personal dictatorship had been strengthened in any way; if sonorous titles were a measure of power, then Stalin would have been entitled to a magnificent collection of them some ten years earlier. But he chose quite consciously not to take this course, and after he had taken over the post of General Secretary of the Party in 1922, he declined all state and government posts.

Stalin raised his command post *above* the government and *above* the state. He controlled everything, but officially was responsible for nothing.

As early as 1931, Leon Trotsky described the mechanism to be used for preparing the communist *coup* in Germany:

Should the new policy succeed, then all the Manuilskys and all the Remmeles would be given full credit, but the initiative would still have been Stalin's. But in the event of its failure, however, Stalin had kept the way completely clear for himself to find someone to blame. This was the quintessence of his strategy. Stalin was strong in this field. (BO, No. 24, p. 12)

The *coup* did not take place and Stalin did indeed find people to blame, and gave them exemplary punishment. He ruled the internal affairs of the Soviet Union in the same way. The victory of the *kolkhoz* system belonged to Stalin's genius, while millions of victims of the same system perished because of its many enemies and the careerist hangers-on who had distorted the Party line. It made the heads of some of these comrades at regional level swim from their successes. Stalin had no connection at all with the great purges - they were Yezhov's fault! Nor did Stalin sign the Pact with Hitler. The Pact passed into history bearing the names of Molotov and Ribbentrop. In Germany it was Hitler, the Chancellor, more than Ribbentrop who bore the official responsibility for this Pact, although he was not present when the Pact was signed. Stalin, who did attend the signing, did not at that time hold any governmental or state appointments; he attended simply as citizen Joseph Stalin, who had not been invested with any state, governmental, military or diplomatic powers, and consequently was not responsible for what was taking place.

It was in exactly the same way that the treaty with Japan was signed on 13 April 1941. Stalin was present, but he did not bear any responsibility for what was taking place. When Stalin later stabbed Japan in the back, at a critical moment when the country was worn out by war, his conscience was clear; *he* had not signed the Pact.

On 6 May 1941, however, Stalin officially took upon himself the burden of state responsibility. For Stalin, the new title did not strengthen his authority, but restricted it; from that moment onwards, he not only took all the most important decisions but official responsibility for them as well. Stalin's power had been restricted until then only by the Soviet Union's external borders, and not always even then. What could have compelled him *voluntarily* to take upon his shoulders the heavy responsibility for his own actions, if he could have remained at the peak of infallibility, while leaving it to others to make the mistakes?

This entire circumstance somehow reminds me of Khrushchev's famous elk hunt. While the animal was still far off, Nikita shouted at the hunters and chuckled at his guest Fidel Castro, who was not having much success. Khrushchev himself was not in the shoot and did not even have a gun in his hands. But when the animal was being driven towards the hunters and there was no way anyone could possibly miss the mark, Nikita picked up a gun ...

Stalin had never taken the levers of state power into his hands in seventeen years. Why should he do so now? According to evidence given by Admiral of the Soviet Fleet N. G. Kuznetsov, 'when Stalin assumed the chairmanship of the Council of People's Commissars, in practice the system of leadership in no way changed'. (VIZH 1965, No. 9, p. 66)

Von der Schulenburg, the German Ambassador in Moscow, reported to his government that 'I do not know of a single problem related to the internal situation in the Soviet Union which was so serious as to induce Stalin to take such a step. But I venture to assert with considerable confidence that the reasons for Stalin's deciding to take over the highest state post are to be sought in foreign policy.' Soviet marshals agree that Stalin's appointment was connected with external problems. (Marshal of the Soviet Union I. Kh. Bagramyan, *Tak nachinalas' voina*, Voenizdat 1971, p. 62)

So what were the external problems which could have impelled Stalin to take such a step? In May 1941, many European states had been crushed by Germany. Problems concerning Soviet relations with France, for instance, simply could not exist. Britain, which had preserved its independence, offered Stalin the hand of friendship in a letter from Churchill sent on 1 July 1940. Roosevelt's attitude to Stalin was more than friendly, and American technology was already flowing like a great river into the Soviet Union. There were only two potential enemies. But Japan, which had been given a performance of Soviet military might in August 1939, had just signed a treaty with the Soviet Union and was turning its gaze in the opposite direction. Thus Germany alone must have provided the reason for Stalin to take that apparently incomprehensible step.

What could Stalin do in relation to Germany by making use of his new official title of head of state? He had only three options. He could have established a lasting and inviolable peace. He could have declared himself official leader of a future armed conflict on the part of the Soviet Union to repel German aggression. Or he could have officially declared an armed conflict on the part of the Soviet Union in order to wage an aggressive war against Germany.

The first option falls down at once. Peace with Germany had already been signed by Molotov's hand. After he took over Molotov's place as head of state, Stalin did absolutely nothing to meet Hitler and begin negotiations with him. Stalin went on using Molotov for peace talks as before. Molotov was known to have tried to meet the German leaders even on 21 June, but Stalin made no such efforts. This means that, whatever his purpose in taking over this official post, it was not to conduct peace negotiations.

Communist propaganda emphasizes the second option: that Stalin saw the German attack coming, and decided personally and officially to place himself at the head of the country's defence. But Germany's onslaught was manifestly unexpected. On 22 June, the head of the government was obliged to address the nation and break the terrible news. But Stalin avoided meeting his direct obligations, which were fulfilled by Molotov, his deputy. Why was it necessary for him to sit in Molotov's chair in May, but to hide behind his broad back in June?

On the evening of 22 June, the Soviet High Command issued a directive to the troops. It is Marshal G. K. Zhukov who speaks:

General N. F. Vatutin said that J. V. Stalin had approved draft directive No. 3 and ordered that my signature be placed on it ... 'All right,' I said. 'Put my signature down on it.' (G. K. Zhukov, *Vospominaniya i razmyshleniya*, APN 1969, P- 251)

We learn from official history that this directive emerged bearing the signatures of Marshal S. K. Timoshenko, People's Commissar for Defence, G. M. Malenkov, member of the council of the secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU and General Zhukov, Chief of the General Staff. (*History of the Second World War*, Vol. 4, p. 38) Stalin thus compelled others to sign the order, while avoiding any personal responsibility for it himself. So why did he take on the responsibility in May? The directive went out to the armed forces to rout the invading enemy. It is a document of the utmost importance. What had the 'member of the council of the secretary' got to do with it?

The following day the composition of the Stavka, the supreme organ of military leadership in the Soviet Union, was announced. The word is untranslatable, but the Stavka consisted of Stalin and a handful of his most trusted colleagues. Stalin categorically refused to head it, agreeing to join this supreme body of military leadership with the rights of an ordinary member only. This gave rise to a somewhat anomalous situation:

Under the existing arrangements, there was no way in which S. K. Timoshenko, People's Commissar for Defence, could act independently and take policy decisions without Stalin. The result was that there were two commanders-in-chief. One was People's Commissar Timoshenko, who was the commander according to the law and statutes. The other was J. V. Stalin, who was commander-in-chief in fact. (*Ibid*)

In a defensive war, Stalin adapted his well-tried method of leadership. He took all the policy decisions, while responsibility for them was borne by the Molotovs, the Malenkovs, the Timoshenkos and the Zhukovs. It took the members of the Politburo one month to compel Stalin to take over the post of People's Commissar for Defence, and, on 8 August, the post of Supreme Commander-in-Chief. Had it really been worth Stalin's while to assume responsibility when the defensive war had been foreseen, in order to do everything he could to avoid responsibility as soon as that war began?

We are compelled to confine ourselves to the third option: that Stalin had exploited Hitler to crush Europe, and was at that point preparing a surprise attack at Germany's back. Stalin intended to head the 'liberation' of Europe in person, and as head of the Soviet government.

The Communist Party had conditioned the Soviet people and army to believe that the order to launch a war of 'liberation' in Europe would be given by Stalin himself. Communist orthodoxy now claims that the Red Army was preparing 'counterattacks'. Nobody was talking about counter-attacks at the time. The Soviet people knew that the war would begin on Stalin's orders, and not as a result of an attack by some enemy or other:

And when Marshal of the Revolution Comrade Stalin gives the signal, hundreds of thousands of pilots, navigators and parachutists will rain down upon the heads of the enemy with the full force of their arms, the arms of socialist justice. The Soviet armies of the air will bring happiness to humanity! (*Pravda*, 18 August 1940)

In his post as Secretary-General of the Party, Stalin could give any order, and that order would be instantly and exactly obeyed. But any order given by Stalin was unofficial, and therein lay Stalin's invulnerability and infallibility. But now this situation no longer satisfied him; he had to give an order, the most important of his life, in such a way that it would be *officially* his.

According to the evidence of Marshal of the Soviet Union K. K. Rokossovski (*Soldatsky dolg*, Moscow 1968, p. n), each Soviet commander held a 'special secret operations envelope' in his safe. This 'letter M red envelope', as it was known, could only be opened on the orders of the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars (until 5 May 1941 this was Vyacheslav Molotov), or of the People's Commissar for Defence, Marshal of the Soviet Union, S. K. Timoshenko. But according to Marshal Zhukov, Timoshenko 'could not take any policy decisions without Stalin'. So Stalin took Molotov's post so that the Prime Order should come from Stalin, and not from Molotov.

A red envelope lay in the safe of every commander, but on 22 June 1941 Stalin issued no order that they be opened. Rokossovski has told us that several commanders took their heads in their hands and opened their envelopes. (The 58th Article laid down that anyone opening a red envelope without authorization would be shot.) But they did not discover in them anything needed for defence.

Of course, we had detailed plans and instructions on what to do on M-Day . . . Everything was written down minutely and in detail . . . All these plans existed. Unfortunately, however, they said nothing about what to do should the enemy suddenly go over to the offensive. (Major-General M. Gretsov, *VIZH* 1965, No. 9, p. 84)

So although the Soviet commanders did have war plans, they had no plans for a *defensive* war. The top Soviet leaders were aware of this; in the first minutes and hours of the war, they resorted to improvisation, composing new directives for the troops instead of sending a short message ordering the envelopes to be opened. In a defensive war, all these envelopes, and everything that had been 'written down minutely and in detail', were no longer needed.

Nor, by the way, did the first directives issued by the top Soviet leaders orientate the troops towards digging themselves in. These were neither defensive nor even counter-offensive directives. They were in essence purely offensive directives. The Soviet leaders went on thinking and planning only on these lines even after the defensive war had been thrust upon them. The content of the red envelopes was quite definite in nature. In an obscure situation the offensive urge of the troops had to be held back somewhat until it had become quite clear what was happening. That is why the first directives were aggressive in character, but their tone was restraining - advance, but not in the way it is written in the red envelopes!

Stalin did not want to take risks in an obscure situation. That is why Stalin's signature does not appear on the most important directives of the 'Great Motherland War'; he had prepared himself to carry out the honoured duty of launching a mission to liberate the peoples of the world, and not to fight a defensive war which had been forced upon him.

Hitler read Schulenburg's telegrams and understood that Stalin was hoping 'to attain an objective of the utmost importance by his own efforts in the field of foreign policy'. Hitler appreciated the danger he was in, and deprived Stalin of the opportunity to give the Prime Order, for which he had assumed the mantle of head of state.

On taking up his duties, each head of government announces a policy programme. On 5 May 1941, when Stalin's appointment had been pre-determined, he made a speech in the Kremlin at a reception held in honour of graduates of military academies. Stalin spoke for 40 minutes. Bearing in mind his impressive ability to keep silent, 40 minutes was a staggeringly long time.

Stalin spoke of something of the utmost importance. His speech was *never* published, and this is a one thousand per cent guarantee of its importance. Stalin spoke about international relations, and about war. Soviet official publications contain quite a few references to this speech:

J. V. Stalin, the Secretary-General of the CPSU (b), in the course of a speech he made at a reception for graduates of military academies on 5 May 1941, gave it clearly to be understood that the German Army was the most probable enemy. (*VIZH* No. 4 1978, p. 85)

The History of the Second World War (Vol. 3, p. 439) confirms this account. Marshal Zhukov, however, who is a much more authoritative source, relates some more interesting details. In Zhukov's words, Stalin adopted his usual manner of asking rhetorical questions, which he then answered himself. 'Was the German Army invincible?' he asked:

The Germans mistakenly consider that their army is perfect and invincible . . . Germany will never have success fighting under the slogans of aggressive wars of conquest, under slogans of subjugating other countries, or of forcing other countries and states into submission. (G. K. Zhukov, *Vospominaniya i razmyshleniya*, p. 236)

So the speech was about war with Germany. Why then did it remain secret? It is understandable that it could not be published before the war, but it is less easy to understand why the speech was not made public once war had broken out. Even if it had not been possible to publish it in its entirety, Stalin could have referred to it in the speech he made on 6 November 1941, for example: 'Did I not warn you all! I was even talking about war with Germany as early as 5 May!'

But Stalin did not say this, and there can only be one reason for this silence. On 5 May, he spoke of the inevitable war, and named Germany as the main enemy, but said not one word about the possibility of a German attack. Had he done so, he or his aides would have recalled it afterwards as confirmation of his

genius and sagacity. But they did not. Throughout Stalin's lifetime and even after his death, the speech remained a Soviet state secret. Collections of Stalin's works contain not just his speeches, but even the notes he made in the margins of books written by others, yet this highly important speech was never published. What is more, much has been done to make sure that it was forgotten for ever. Immediately after the war had ended, Stalin's book *The Great Motherland War* was published in editions of millions of copies in many languages. The book begins with Stalin's radio broadcast on 3 July 1941. The purpose of the book was clear. It was to hammer the idea into our heads that Stalin first began to speak about the Soviet—German war only after Germany had invaded the Soviet Union, and that he spoke only about defence. Stalin in fact began to talk about the war before the German invasion, not after it, and he spoke not about defence but about something else. If the speech had been about defence, then why keep it secret, particularly after the Germans had invaded?

We have already seen how, after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact had been signed, Zhukov and Meretskov, two prominent Soviet military leaders, and Lavrenty Beria, the most outstanding chief of police of all times and of all nations, did a great deal to destroy everything connected with the defence of Soviet territory. Then Stalin began to talk about war with Germany. He spoke at a secret gathering, but in such a way that he was heard by all the marshals, all the generals, and all the graduates from the military academies. What would Zhukov, Meretskov and Beria do in this situation? Surely they would begin to lay down mines in the frontier areas and, erect barbed wire, and mine bridges? No, they did just the opposite :

At the beginning of May 1941, following Stalin's speech at the reception for military academy graduates, the brake was applied even more strongly to all the work that was being done to build engineered defences and to lay down mines. (I. Stari-nov, *op. cit.*, p. 186)

If we do not believe Colonel Starinov, we may turn to the German archives to find exactly the same thing there. German intelligence apparently never obtained the full text of Stalin's speech, but there are many direct and indirect signs which indicate that German intelligence believed that Stalin's speech of 5 May 1941 was about war with Germany. The same German intelligence observed that Soviet minefields and other engineered defence obstacles were being removed in May and June 1941.

May 1941 marked a sharp turning-point for the whole of Soviet propaganda. Before that, communist newspapers had glorified war and rejoiced that Germany was destroying an increasing number of countries, governments, armies and political parties.

The Soviet leaders were delighted with 'modern war in all its terrible beauty!' (*Pravda*, 19 August 1940), and rubbed their hands gleefully over the sight of Europe reduced to 'a putrid scrap-heap, a pornographic spectacle where jackal eats jackal'. (*Pravda*, 25 December 1939) A friendly greetings telegram from Stalin 'To the Head of the German State, Herr Adolf Hitler' appears on the same page. The words jackal eats jackal' appeared directly under this token of friendship.

Then suddenly everything changed. The day after Stalin's secret speech, *Pravda* adopted a very different tone:

The fire of the Second Imperialist War blazes beyond the frontiers of our Motherland. The whole weight of its incalculable misfortunes is laid on the shoulders of the workers. The people do not want war. Their gazes are fixed on the countries of socialism which are reaping the fruits of peaceful labour. They see with every justification a solid bastion for peace in the armed forces of our Motherland, in the Red Army and Navy. In the present complex international situation it is necessary to be ready for surprises of all kinds . . . (*Pravda*, 6 May 1941, leading article)

In March 1939, Stalin had accused Britain and France of wanting to drive Europe into war, while they remained aloof so that they could later 'step on to the stage .with fresh forces, in the "interests of peace", of

course, and dictate their conditions to the weakened participants in the war'. (Stalin, Report, 10 March 1939) But only one leader was present at the signing of the pact which was the key to the war, and that was Stalin. Neither Japanese, American, British nor French leaders attended the signing of the pact which began the war. Even the German Chancellor was absent. But Stalin was there, and it was Stalin who for the time being stood aside from the war.

Shortly afterwards, on 17 September 1939, the Red Army delivered its surprise attack on Poland. Next day the Soviet Union announced its reasons by radio:

Poland has become a convenient springboard for hazards and surprises of all kinds which could constitute a threat to the Soviet Union . . . the Soviet government can no longer remain indifferent towards these facts ... in view of such circumstances, the Soviet government has directed the High Command of the Red Army to order its troops to cross the frontier and to take into its protection the lives and property of the populace . . . (*Pravda*, 18 September 1939)

But who, it might be asked, turned Poland into a 'convenient springboard for hazards of all kinds?' Molotov's and Stalin's cynicism and effrontery knew no bounds. Hitler went into Poland in order 'to extend *Lebensraum* for the Germans'. Molotov had a different purpose: 'in order to help the Polish people out of an ill-starred war into which they have been driven by foolish leaders, and to give them the opportunity to lead a peaceful life'. (*Ibid.*)

But Soviet communists even to the present day have not changed their view on the nature of these events. The official collection of documents on the History of Soviet Frontier Troops (*Pogranichnye voiska SSSR 1939-41*, Moscow Nauka) was published in 1970. Document No. 192 states that the aim of Soviet operations in September 1939 was to 'help the Polish people to leave the war'.

The Soviet Union has always helped everyone altruistically to find the way to peace. Molotov signed a neutrality pact with Japan on 13 April 1941

to uphold peaceful and friendly relations, and mutually to respect territorial integrity and inviolability ... in the event of one of the Parties to the treaty becoming the object of hostilities on the part of one or several third powers, the other Party to the treaty will remain neutral throughout the whole of the conflict.

When Stalin was on the verge of being destroyed, Japan kept its word. But when Japan was on the verge of destruction, the Red Army delivered a crushing surprise attack on her. Afterwards the Soviet government explained that such a policy is the only means capable of bringing peace nearer, of freeing the peoples from further sacrifices and sufferings and to give the Japanese people the opportunity to save itself from further dangers and destruction . . . (Soviet government statement, 8 August 1945)

It must be noted that the declaration was formally made on 8 August, while the Soviet troops delivered their blow on 9 August. In practice, there was a time-gap. The attack was made at local Far East time. The announcement was actually made several hours later at Moscow time.

In military language this is called 'preparation and delivery of a surprise first strike with the opening of a new strategic front'. (General S. P. Ivanov, *Nachal'nyi Period Viony*, Moscow Voen-izdat 1974, p. 281) In political language it is called 'a just and humane act by the USSR'. (Colonel A. S. Savin, *VIZH* 1985, No. 8, p. 56)

After the first crushing strike had been delivered, Marshal of the Soviet Union P. Ya Malinovsky addressed his troops, saying that

The Soviet people cannot live and work in peace while the Japanese imperialists are rattling their arms on our far eastern frontiers while awaiting the right time to attack our Motherland. (*Kommunist*, No. 12, 1985, p. 85)

Malinovsky gave this speech on 10 August 1945, just four days after Hiroshima had disappeared. Did the 'Japanese imperialists' really have nothing to do but sit and wait for 'the right time'?

Modern Soviet publications still insist that 'the Soviet Union was pursuing the aim of saving the peoples of Asia, the Japanese people included, from further sacrifices and suffering'. (VIZH 1985, No. 8)

In May 1941 the Soviet press suddenly began to talk about how the peoples of Europe wanted peace and were looking with hope to the Red Army. These were the same words and tone which were invariably used before every communist 'liberation'.

The Great Purge in the Soviet Union was completed at the end of 1938. A new stage began. There were new times, new aims and new slogans. It was in March 1939 that Stalin first began to talk about the need to be ready for some 'surprises', not inside the country but in the international arena. In August 1939 Stalin presented the first surprise, the first 'unexpected event' for which the whole of the Soviet people and indeed the whole world were sighing - the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Thereupon German troops, quickly followed by Soviet troops, invaded Poland. The official Soviet explanation is that 'Poland had been converted into a field of various unexpected events'. Once this threat had been removed by the unselfish action of the Soviet government, the Red Army and the NKVD, Stalin began calling for readiness to meet 'new unexpected events', since 'the international situation is becoming increasingly complicated'.

It would seem that there was nothing more simple; peace had been signed with Germany, so where was the complexity in the situation? But Stalin went on repeating his warning not to have faith in the apparent lack of complications, to be ready to face unexpected events and any sharp turns and changes.

May 1941 was the month when the slogan 'Be ready for unexpected events' suddenly sounded throughout the country like an alarm bell. It sounded on the first day of May from the front page of *Pravda* and was repeated a thousand times over by all other newspapers, and by hundreds of thousands of voices of commissars, political workers, and propagandists, all interpreting Stalin's slogan for the masses. The call 'to be ready for unexpected events' resounded in the order No. 191 of the People's Commissar for Defence issued to 'all companies, batteries, squadrons, air squadrons and on ships'.

Was Stalin perhaps warning the country and army of the possibility of a sudden German attack? No; the German attack came as a complete surprise to Stalin himself; and he could hardly have given warnings about dangers which he did not foresee. All talk about unexpected events ceased on 22 June 1941, and this slogan was never repeated again. Contemporary Soviet publications contain no mention at all of the slogan 'prepare for unexpected events', although this was one of the most strident motifs of Soviet propaganda during the 'pre-war period'.

At first glance it is surprising that Stalin himself never subsequently remembered his slogan. He could have said somewhere, 'Hitler has suddenly attacked us - I warned you to be ready for unexpected events!' But Stalin never said this. 'Remember Order No. 191?' Marshal Timoshenko could have recollected on occasion after the war. 'I even warned you about it in that order!' Soviet historians and Party bureaucrats could have explained what a wise Party we had even without naming Stalin and Timoshenko. The pages of its main newspaper carried calls almost every day to be ready for unexpected events. But neither Stalin, nor Timoshenko, nor anyone else ever recalled that alarm cry of May and June 1941. Why was that? Because what was understood by the slogan 'prepare for unexpected events' was not the German invasion, but something quite the opposite. Under this slogan the Chekists were removing minefields on the frontiers, not laying them down, and they knew that this was preparation for the Central Unexpected Event of the twentieth century.

In order to have an idea of the true meaning of this slogan, we must without fail look at the first page of *Pravda* of 1 May 1941. It was this page which set the tone for a great choir of many voices, which simply repeated *Pravda's* statement. On the main front page of the newspaper, two quotations stand out. Both are Stalin's. The first, which comes right at the beginning of the leading article, states that 'what has been accomplished in the USSR can also be accomplished in other countries'. The second is in an order from the People's Commissar for Defence about the need to be ready to face up to hazards and 'tricks' on the part of our foreign enemies.

Everything else on the front page is about the brutal war gripping Europe, the sufferings of the workers, their longing for peace and the hopes they place in the Red Army. Much is said about Soviet efforts to preserve peace. Japan (whose hour had not yet struck) is given as an example of a neighbour, with whom good relations had finally been established; Germany, however, is not numbered among the good friends.

Since the enemy is cunning and perfidious, the argument runs, we must reply to his machinations not simply by defending our own territory but by liberating the peoples of Europe from the disasters of a blood-letting war.

After five days of this noisy, orchestrated press campaign, Stalin took over the post of head of the government and made his secret speech in which he named Germany as the main enemy. Having thus assumed state responsibility for foreseeing 'unexpected events', Stalin was suddenly faced with Hitler's onslaught in June. This was such an 'unexpected event' that it compelled Stalin to do everything possible to avoid assuming responsibility for any state decisions at all. Evidently Stalin had been preparing, not for a German invasion, but for 'unexpected events' of quite the opposite kind.

CHAPTER 20

Words and Actions

Words do not always match actions.

MOLOTOV (in conversation with Hitler, 13
November 1940)

In the best-known fragment of his secret speech of 5 May 1941, Stalin said that 'the war with Germany will not begin before 1942'. From the vantage point of what we know today, Stalin's mistake is obvious.

But let us not be too quick to mock Stalin's errors. If the speech was secret, then Stalin surely wanted to conceal its contents from the enemy. In the Kremlin, however, Stalin was heard by all the lecturers and graduates from all the military academies, as well as by the country's highest political leaders and the most senior Red Army officers. What is more, the content of his speech was passed on to all Soviet generals and colonels. 'In the middle of May 1941,' wrote Major-General B. Tramm,

Air Force Major-General P. P. Kobelev, chairman of the Central Council of OSOAVIAKHIM (Society for the Defence of the Soviet Union and for the Development of its Aviation and Chemical Industries), gathered together the senior staff of the Council, and reported to us the basic points of the speech made by J. V. Stalin at the government reception held in the Kremlin in honour of graduates from the military academies. (*VIZH* 1980, No. 6, p. 52)

Despite the supposed secrecy of Stalin's speech, thousands of people knew its content. Is there an explanation for such a paradox? Indeed there is. We know from the memoirs of Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union I. G. Kuznetsov that after Zhukov had been appointed Chief of the General Staff, a very important directive was written which 'aimed the attention of the general officers commanding military

districts and fleets at Germany as the most probable enemy in the forthcoming war'. (*Nakanune*, Moscow Voenizdat 1966, p. 313)

The directive lay in the General Staff building for two months, and on 5 May 1941 it was passed on to the headquarters of the frontier military districts for action. There is much to indicate that it was received by the headquarters on the day it had been sent. Marshal Bagramyan, for instance, has spoken about it. In fact Soviet marshals often talk about this highly secret directive, although they never make quotations from it. In the course of half a century, only one single sentence from this top secret document has ever got into the press, and this was 'to be ready, on the orders of the High Command, to deliver swift blows utterly to destroy the enemy, to carry out combat operations over his territory and seize important positions'. (V. A. *Anfilov*, *Bessermertnyii podvig*, Moscow Nauka 1971, p. 171)

Had there been one word about defence in that directive, the marshals and the communist historians would not have failed to quote it. The whole of the remaining text of the 5 May directive is not, however, suitable for quotation. The directive is to remain top secret even half a century after the war has ended.

Soviet censorship let slip only one sentence, but this was enough to reveal fully the sense of this carefully concealed document. In a defensive war, a soldier does not wait for orders. For hundreds of years the Russian soldier has gone in to do battle with aggressors without waiting for orders from above. When the enemy crosses the river marking the frontier, that means to the ordinary soldier that the war has begun. The frontiers of Russia have been crossed by great armies of terrifying conquerors. Every time that this has happened, the Russian soldier, like the soldier of any other country and nation, has known from time immemorial that when the enemy crosses the frontier it means war, and he goes into action without awaiting orders to do so. Guard-duty service has been devised in such a way that it frequently places every soldier in a situation where he has to make his own independent decision as to when he should use his weapons. The right and duty of a soldier is to kill anyone who tries to reach the target he is protecting. Soviet law especially preserves the right of each soldier to use his weapons independently. The same law severely punishes any soldier who does not use his arms when the situation demands that he do so.

A soldier on a state frontier is a soldier at an action station. In a defensive war he needs neither orders nor directives.

A defensive war would usually begin like this. A soldier who has been freezing all night is getting ready to wrap himself up in his greatcoat and stand down. He gives his relief a wakening prod with his foot, but suddenly rubs his eyes - enemy soldiers are crossing the river. The soldier opens rapid fire, killing the leading enemy soldiers and warning his own comrades. The commander of the detachment wakes up, swears while still half-awake and, grasping what is happening, chases his other soldiers into the trenches. By then, fighting has flared up along thousands of kilometres of frontier. The platoon commander comes on the scene. He co-ordinates the fire of his detachments. Then other commanders of more senior rank turn up. The fighting becomes more organized. A report flies off to regimental headquarters, and from there to the divisional headquarters.

That is how a defensive war begins. Yet the top-secret directive of 5 May 1941 provided for millions of Red Army soldiers to enter the war in response to a single order which was to be received from the Soviet High Command. A half-asleep soldier on the frontier can see the enemy making an attack, but how can the comrades in the Kremlin know that a war has started? Unless, perhaps, they themselves had fixed the date on which it was to begin.

The first to enter a defensive war is the private soldier, folio wed by the sergeant, and then the platoon commander. In an offensive war, everything is the other way round. The first to enter it is the Commander-in-Chief, and then the Chief of the General Staff, followed by the commanders of the fronts, the navies and the armies. The ordinary soldier is the last to know that an aggressive war has begun. Millions of soldiers enter a defensive war individually, while they all enter an aggressive war as one man.

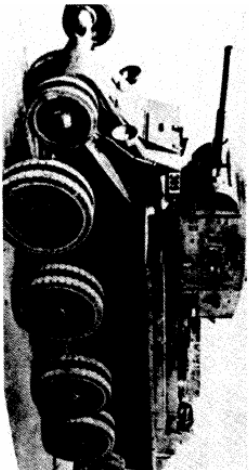
Hitler's soldiers entered enemy territory as one man, minute by minute, hour by hour. Stalin's soldiers also did the same thing in Finland, in Mongolia and in Bessarabia. That was the way in which they were to have gone to war with Germany.

The 5 May directive was issued, but the date when the war was due to begin was kept a close secret. Await the signal and be ready at any moment, the directive told the Soviet generals. Once he had issued this directive, Stalin immediately took over the post of head of the Soviet government so that he personally would give the signal for the directive to be carried into effect.

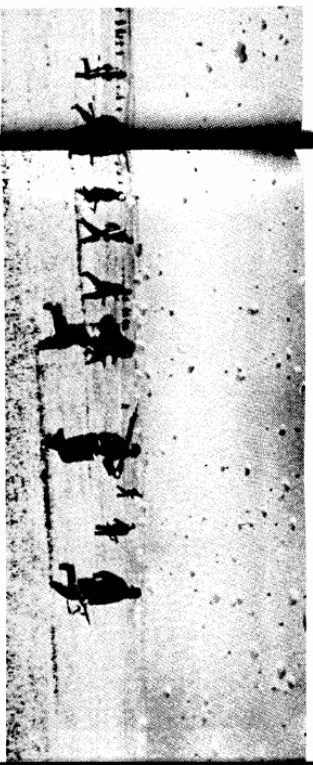
Hitler gave his own troops the order to carry out a similar directive a little earlier . . .



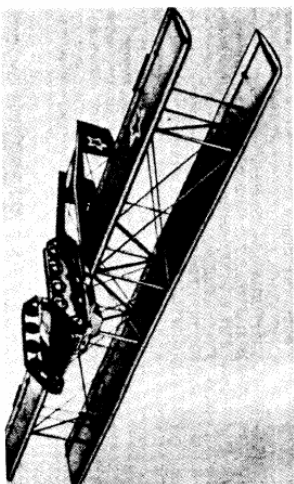
Icebreaker in action: the Germans destroyed Poland, but the flower of victory was gathered by the Soviets.



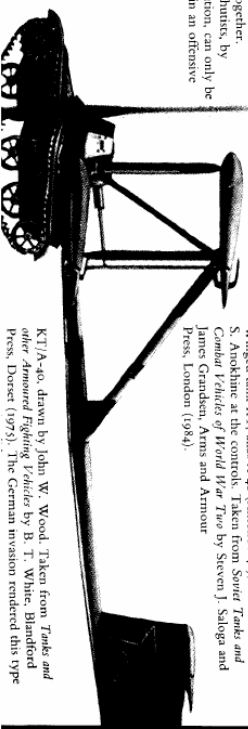
These Soviet tanks, with removable external tracks, were designed for use on the German *autobahn*. They were of no use on Soviet territory thus equipped.



The vast sums of money spent on training and equipping Soviet parashutists during the thirties should have been used to feed Soviet children.



Winged tank KT, alias A-40 (Antonov-40), in the air. Pilot S. Anokhin at the controls. Taken from *Soviet Tanks and Combat Vehicles of World War Two* by Steven J. Zaloga and James Gradden, Arms and Armour Press, London (1984).

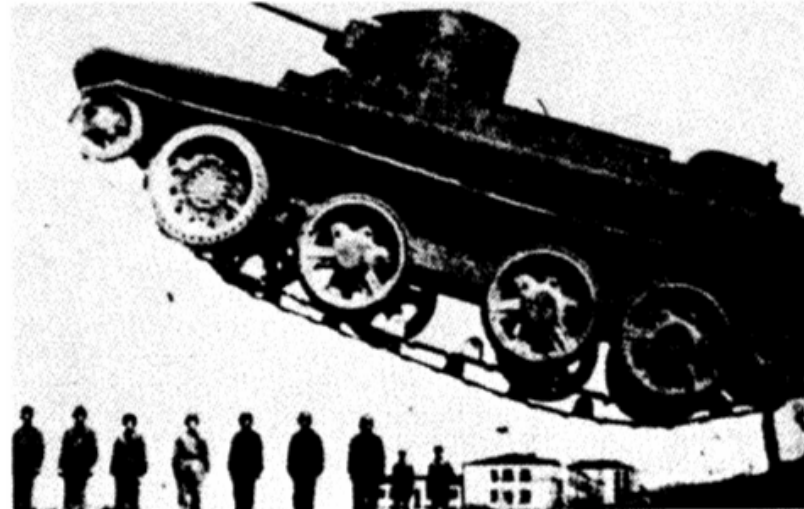


KT/A-40, drawn by John W. Wood. Taken from *Tanks and other Armoured Fighting Vehicles* by B. T. White, Blandford Press, Dorset (1975). The German invasion rendered this type

At the start of the Second World War, Stalin had more parashutists than all the other countries put together. Parashutists, by definition, can only be used in an offensive war.



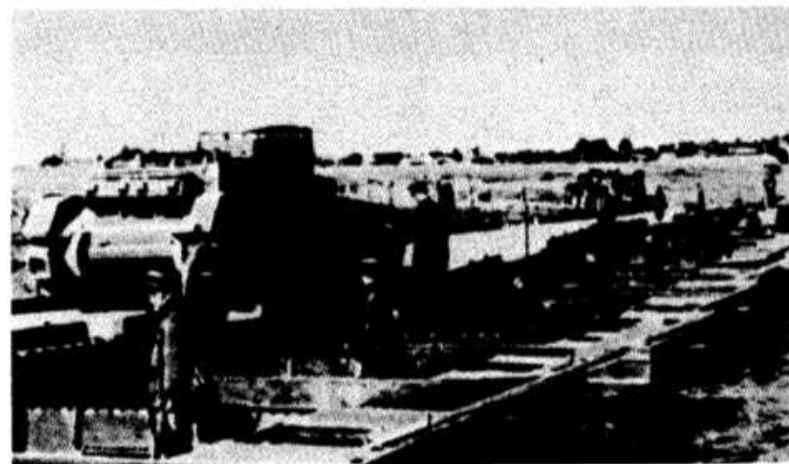
Invasion preparations. The two-seater plane R-5 could also carry sixteen parachutists.



Genghis Khan conquered the world with huge numbers of scantily armed troops and brilliant manoeuvres, rather than with powerful weapons. The BT Soviet tanks were based on similar principles: they were produced in vast quantities with reduced armour, and were capable of exceptional speed.



Переправа тяжелого орудия на учениях. Ленинградский военный округ, 1940 г.



Переправа танков на тактических занятиях. 1940 г.

In 1940–41 Stalin created 63 tank divisions, each with bridge-building capabilities, but without the engineers, trained to blow up bridges, who are necessary in a defensive war. *Top:* Crossing a river. Exercise in Leningrad military region. *Bottom:* Tanks crossing a river. Tactical exercise.



Final preparations:
Marshal Timonshenko
and Marshal Zhukov
on the German
border.

In a defensive war,
troops are scattered
and camouflaged.
When the Germans
came to Soviet
territory, they found
an incredible
concentration of
Soviet troops ready
for an offensive.







The KV-1, the most powerful tank of the time. It sometimes took thirty or forty direct hits for German shells to make an impact. But like the majority of Soviet armed vehicles and equipment, these tanks were moving secretly by rail to the German borders and were powerless when attacked.

Before Hitler attacked, Stalin took hundreds of thousands of GULAG prisoners and secretly moved them towards the German borders. To what purpose?





We do not know, and apparently we shall never find out, what the top-secret directive of 5 May 1941 contained. It is clear, however, that it was a directive about a war with Germany, but a war which was not to be started by a German invasion, but by some other means. If the directive had had several alternative versions, and one of those had covered the contingency of Germany starting the war, then all the Soviet leaders in the Kremlin need then have done on 22 June 1941 was to telephone the officers commanding the frontier military districts and tell them, 'Open your safes, take out the directive dated 5 May and carry out what it says.'

If the 5 May directive had contained several alternative sets of orders, and one of them had been defensive, then the officer commanding the frontier military district could have been told, 'Put a line through the first nine versions, but carry out the tenth, the final one.' *But there were no defensive versions in the directive.*

That is why the directive of 5 May was never put into effect. The Soviet directive completely lost its point the moment the Germans invaded. It became instantly outdated, in the same way that all Soviet motorway tanks became obsolete.

Since the directive was now useless, the Soviet leaders in the Kremlin were compelled to improvise. Timoshenko and Malenkov were obliged to waste time composing a completely new directive. Then more time had to be wasted enciphering it, transmitting it, receiving it, and deciphering it. The 22 June directive, incidentally, was a thoroughly aggressive document. But it slightly dampened down the offensive urge of the Soviet troops.

It must not be thought that all the copies of the 5 May directives had simply lain in the safes, waiting for the hour to come to use them. The directive had been issued to be executed, and in accordance with its instructions, troops were regrouped on a grand scale on the borders. In the frontier areas, hundreds of kilometres of barbed-wire entanglements and thousands of mines were removed. Hundreds of thousands

of tons of ammunition were moved right up to the frontier and stockpiled in the open. Hundreds of thousands of tons of stores of all kinds, needed for a swift and unavoidable war, were brought into the frontier areas.

On 15 June 1941, the time came for the generals in command of armies, corps and divisions to learn more about the Soviet leaders' intentions. That day, the headquarters of the five frontier military districts issued combat orders which had been written on the basis of the top-secret 5 May directive. The circle of the initiated now extended to several hundred men. The orders issued on 15 June 1941 to middle-rank commanders in the Red Army also remained top secret, but there were several of these, so they are quoted more fully and more often. The operative sentence from the order issued on 15 June 1941 by the headquarters of the Baltic Special Military District to the officers commanding its armies and corps is well known to historians: 'We must be ready at any time to carry out the combat mission.'

Now let us return to Stalin's secret speech of 5 May 1941. In a *secret* speech to a full auditorium, Stalin spoke of the aggressive war against Germany, which would begin in 1942. On the very same day, in a *top secret* directive, the officers commanding the frontier military districts were instructed to be ready for aggression at any moment.

There is another coincidence. On 13 June 1941, TASS transmitted a report which said that the Soviet Union did not intend to attack Germany. It was moving troops up to the German borders solely for exercise purposes. Yet two days later, on 15 June, the Soviet generals in the frontier military districts received an order which was strictly for their eyes alone — to be ready at any moment to seize positions on foreign territory.

By May and June of 1941, Stalin knew that it was no longer possible to hide the preparations which the Soviet Union was making to 'liberate' Europe. That was why he 'naively' declared to the whole world in the TASS report that the Soviet Union was not preparing to make an attack. Naturally, German intelligence did not believe such a crudely forged document, and it was with this in mind that Stalin 'secretly' informed thousands of his officers, and German intelligence at the same time, that the Soviet Union would attack Germany in 1942.

Although it was no longer possible for Stalin to conceal his intentions, it *was* possible to conceal the date. This is just what Stalin's 'secret' speech was calculated to achieve. If Hitler did not believe Stalin's overt statements, the theory went, then maybe he would fall for his 'secret' one. Hitler had enough sense to believe neither.

CHAPTER 21

Living Peaceably with Sharp Teeth

*The enemy must be caught unawares, and the time
chosen when his troops are scattered.*

STALIN (Vol. 6, p. 158)

On 8 May 1941, two days after Stalin's 'secret' speech, TASS broadcast a vigorous denial of a Japanese press-agency report of massive Soviet troop movements:

Japanese newspapers are publishing reports issued by the Domei Tsusin Agency in which it states that the Soviet Union is concentrating strong military forces on its western frontiers ... In this connection, passenger traffic along the Trans-Siberian Railway has been stopped, so that troops from the Far East can be transferred mainly to its western frontiers. Strong military forces are also being transferred there from central Asia ... A military mission headed by Kuznetsov has left Moscow for Tehran. The purpose of the mission, the Agency notes, is connected with the granting of airfields to the Soviet Union in central and western areas of Iran.

TASS is authorized to state that this suspiciously strident Domei Tsusin report, borrowed from some unknown United Press correspondent, is the fruit of the sick imagination of its authors . . . There is no 'concentration of strong military forces on the western frontiers of the USSR, nor are any envisaged. The Domei Tsusin report contained one grain of truth, which moreover is given out in a crudely distorted form, and this is that one rifle division is being transferred from the Irkutsk area to near Novosibirsk, because there are better billeting conditions in Novosibirsk. Everything else contained in the Domei Tsusin report is sheer fantasy.

Through their American sources, the Japanese newspapers accurately forecast events. Three months later, Soviet troops went into Iran and built not only airfields, but much else besides. Domei Tsusin's reference to 'troop concentrations on an exceptionally large scale' was correct: in addition to other forces, Stalin concentrated 20 mechanized corps and five airborne assault corps on the borders with Germany.

TASS spoke of one rifle division being sent 'from Irkutsk to Novosibirsk'. Let us hear other witnesses. Lieutenant-General G. Shelakhov was a major-general at the time, and Chief of Staff of the 1st Army of the Red Banner on the Eastern Front. 'According to a directive from the People's Commissariat for Defence of 16 April 1941,' he wrote, 'the headquarters of the 18th and 3rd Rifle Corps, the 21st and 66th Rifle Divisions, the 21st and the 212th Airborne Assault Brigades and several special purpose units were moved from the complement of the Far Eastern Front to the west of the country.' (*VIZH*, 1969, No. 3, p. 56)

The transfer of airborne assault brigades to reinforce the five already in the western areas of the country is evidence that an offensive operation on a massive scale was being prepared. The bogus TASS 'denial' lent secrecy to the operation, in order that it would take the enemy by surprise.

The 212nd Airborne Assault Brigade was Marshal Zhukov's favourite. In August 1939, it was serving along with the OSN AZ battalion of the NK VD in Zhukov's personal reserve; when he launched his crushing surprise attack against the Japanese, the brigade was used as crack infantry in the strike which hit at the rear of the Japanese 6th Army.

Zhukov then secretly transferred this, the best brigade in the Red Army, from the Far East to join the complement of the 3rd Airborne Assault Corps on the Romanian frontier. Hitler did not allow this brigade — or any of the massive concentration of Soviet troops on the western border—to be used for their intended purposes. Operation Barbarossa forced the Soviet Union onto the defensive, and the 3rd Airborne Assault Corps was no longer needed. It was then re-formed into the 87th Rifle Division (later to become the 13th Guards Division), and distinguished itself in defensive fighting.

We can follow the secret movement of these troops from the Far East through many sources. Both Marshals Zhukov and I. Kh. Bagramyan confirm that the 31st Rifle Corps arrived in the Kiev Special Military District on 25 May 1941. This means that when the TASS 'denial' was issued, the 31st Rifle Corps was somewhere on the Trans-Siberian Railway. Colonel-General I. Lyudnikov states that, after he had set up, mobilized and then

taken over command of the 200th Rifle Division, he was ordered to join the complement of the 31st Rifle Corps. Then, like all its numerous brothers-in-arms, this corps was secretly moved right up to the German frontier. But Hitler did not allow the 31st Rifle Corps to complete the journey which it had begun.

Anyone who wishes to do so may re-trace the routes which these other corps, divisions and brigades took when they were secretly transferred from the Far East, by referring to the many recollections published by Soviet marshals and generals; to evidence from Soviet soldiers who were transferred from the Far East and who, on finding themselves on the German and Romanian borders on 22 July, became prisoners of war; to German intelligence reports, and to many other sources.

The TASS denial mentioned a rifle division which was transferred from Irkutsk to Novosibirsk because the billeting conditions there were better. For many years now I have been unsuccessfully searching for some trace of this mysterious division. I have found nothing; but in the process, I have turned up a mass of information about other divisions; in Irkutsk and Novosibirsk, in Chita and Ulan Ude, in Blagoveshchensk and Spassk, in Iman and Barabash, in Khabarovsk and Voroshilov. All of them entrained, not simply to off-load in a neighbouring town a few hundred kilometres up the line, but to disembark at the western frontiers. An official history, which was in fact published in Irkutsk (*Zabailkal'sky voennyi okrug*, Irkutsk 1972), tells of many divisions being loaded on trains, all headed for the western borders. The 57th Tank Division, commanded by Colonel V. A. Mishulin, secretly entrained here in April. Mishulin had no idea for what purpose. From Irkutsk it was conveyed to the Kiev Special Military District, and was ordered to off-load near Shepetovka.

Meanwhile the flow of troops along the Trans-Siberian Railway (and along all other main lines) was growing. We know that corps from the Far East began to de-train in the Ukraine on 25 May 1941: the 31st Rifle Corps, for example, off-loaded near Zhitomir. The following day, the officer commanding the Urals Military District was ordered to transfer two rifle divisions to the Baltic. (Major-General A. Grylev and Professor V. Khvostov, *Kommunist*, 1968, No. 12, p. 67) That same day, the Trans-Baikal Military District and the Far Eastern Front were ordered to prepare to send a further nine divisions, including three tank divisions, to the western part of the country. (*Ibid*) The 16th Army was already on the Trans-Siberian Railway; the 22nd and the 24th Armies were heading towards it.

The greatest falsehood in the TASS 'denial' was not about 'billeting conditions', however, but about the concentration of troops on the western border. 'There is no concentration,' it stated, '*and none is foreseen.*' That was the most important point. First, the concentration was there, and the German invasion confirmed that it exceeded even the most daring forecasts. Secondly, while all these brigades, divisions and corps were being transferred, plans were being laid for an even greater and truly unprecedented railway operation, namely the transfer by rail of the Second Strategic Echelon of the Red Army. The directive ordering the officers commanding the troops to begin the transfer of this echelon was given on 13 May. The TASS 'denial' was published while this was being set up.

Major-General A. A. Lobachev, who was a member of the Military Council of the 16th Army at the time, recalled the events of 26 May 1941:

The Chief of Staff reported that an important enciphered message concerning the 16th Army had arrived from Moscow . . . this order required that the 16th Army be redeployed to a new location. M. F. Lukin had to report immediately to the General Staff to be given instructions, while Colonel M. A. Shalin and myself had to arrange to send off the military trains.

'Where to?' I asked Kurochkin.

'Westwards.'

We took advice and decided to send the tank crews first, then the 152nd Division and the remaining formations, and finally the army headquarters and the units appended to it.

'Send the trains by night. No one must know that the army is leaving,' the Officer Commanding warned.

By the time the trains carrying the tanks had left, Kurochkin and Zimin arrived, gathered together the command personnel of the 5th Corps, and expressed the wish to General Alekseenko and to all the commanders that they would not let down the Trans-Baikal traditions . . . The men listened to these warm parting words, and everybody thought not so much about military training, but that the subject might

shortly become one of military action. (General A. A. Loba-chev, *Tmdnymi Dorogami*, Moscow Voenizdat 1960, p. 123)

General Lobachev was to relate some surprising things later. General Lukin, the officer commanding the 16th Army, Lobachev himself, and Colonel M. A. Shalin, the 16th Army Chief of Staff and future head of the GRU, all knew that the 16th Army was being transferred westwards, but they did not know exactly where. All the other generals in the 16th Army were 'secretly' informed that the army's destination was the Iranian frontier. The less senior officers on the command staff were told that the purpose of the displacement was training exercises, while the wives of the officers were told that the army was off to camp.

In a defensive war, there is no need to deceive the generals in this way. In the German Army, the same thing was being done at the same time, when disinformation was being spread about Operation Sea Lion. It is a sure sign that a surprise attack is in preparation when the troops are deliberately deceived about where operations are going to take place. In order to dissemble from the enemy, one must also dissemble from one's own troops. Aggressors have always done this: Hitler did it, and so did Stalin.

It is interesting that in April 1941, everybody broadly understood that the 16th Army was going off to war:

'Are you going off to fight,' Lobachev's wife asked him point-blank.

'Where did you get that from?'

'Come off it! I read the papers, don't I?'

(Ibid)

This was a highly interesting psychological moment. I have questioned hundreds of people who belonged to that generation, and they all had a presentiment that war was coming. I was amazed, and asked where these presentiments had come from. From the newspapers, they all replied.

We, people of today, seldom find direct evidence of an imminent and unavoidable war when we scan the yellowing newspaper pages of those years. Yet the people of that generation knew, by reading between the lines, that war was unavoidably approaching. Those people in Siberia could not have known about the preparations which Hitler was making; their feeling that war could not be avoided must have been based on Soviet preparations.

General Lobachev recalls the incredible degree of secrecy in which the army was transferred: the military trains only moving by night; trains which stopped at neither important stations nor at medium-sized ones; the transfer of the 16th Army headquarters in goods wagons with their doors and windows completely closed; the small stations where the trains halted, with no one allowed to leave the wagons. In those days a passenger train took more than eleven days and nights to cross the Trans-Siberian Railway, while goods trains took longer. Officers and men can be transported in completely closed wagons. But here we are talking about an army headquarters. Such a degree of secrecy is unusual even by Soviet standards. In 1945 a stream of troops was to flow back along the Trans-Siberian Railway in the opposite direction to take part in the surprise strike against Japanese troops in Manchuria and China. For purposes of concealment, all generals travelled in officers' uniforms which had far fewer stars on their shoulder-straps than their ranks entitled them to wear, but even so, they travelled in passenger wagons. Yet in 1941 the generals had travelled in goods wagons. Why?

CHAPTER 22

The TASS Report

*Stalin was not one of those figures whose
real intentions were ever openly declared.*

ROBERT CONQUEST

(The Great Terror, London, 1968)

On 13 June 1941, Moscow Radio broadcast an unusual and puzzling report from TASS. It claimed that 'like the Soviet Union, Germany is also steadfastly observing the conditions of the Soviet—German non-aggression pact . . .' and that 'these rumours [of a German attack on the Soviet Union] are propaganda clumsily concocted by forces which are hostile to the Soviet Union and Germany, and which are interested in further extending and developing the war . . .' The main Soviet newspapers published this report the next day. Yet within the week, Germany had attacked the Soviet Union.

Everybody knew who had written the TASS report. Stalin's characteristic style was recognized by generals serving in the various Soviet headquarters, by GULAG prisoners, and by Western experts. Although Stalin purged TASS after the war, none of the leading figures in this institution were ever accused of having spread reports which could have been considered 'manifestly harmful'. Stalin could also have put the blame for broadcasting the TASS report onto any member of the Politburo, but he did not do this either; he took the entire responsibility for it himself.

Much has been written about this TASS report in both the foreign and the Soviet press. Everyone who has dealt with the subject has laughed at Stalin's touching naivety. The TASS report, however, is not so much amusing as mysterious and incomprehensible. Only one thing is clear: the identity of its author. All the rest is an enigma.

The TASS report appears to contradict everything we know about Stalin's character. Boris Bazhanov, who was Stalin's personal secretary and knew him better than anyone, describes him as 'secretive and cunning in

the extreme . . . He possessed the gift of silence to a high degree, and in this he was unique in a country where everyone talks too much.'

Many writers have testified to Stalin's taciturnity: 'He was an irreconcilable enemy of verbal inflation, or garrulousness,' wrote Abdurachman Avtokhranov. 'Don't say what you think, and don't think what you say, could be another motto for his life.' Robert Conquest, a prominent researcher into the Stalin period, has observed that 'we still have to peer through the darkness of Stalin's exceptional secretiveness', and that 'Stalin never said what was on his mind, even when speaking about his political aims'. (*The Great Terror*)

The ability to keep silent, in Dale Carnegie's apt words, is the most rarely found talent of all in human beings. From this viewpoint Stalin was a genius. Nor was this only a very strong trait in his character; it also served as a very strong weapon in dispute. He lulled his enemies with his silence, so that the suddenness of his blows made them irresistible. Why then did Stalin suddenly publicize his thoughts about relations with Germany in a Radio Moscow broadcast? Where was his secretiveness and cunning then? If Stalin had any thoughts about how future events would develop, why did he not discuss them in the close circle of his comrades-in-arms? Who passes important messages to his army through the radio station of the capital and the main newspapers? The army, navy, secret police, concentration camps, industry, transport, agriculture, and the entire population of the Soviet Union formed part of the state system. They were all subordinated, not to newspaper reports, but to their superiors, who in turn received orders through special, often secret channels from their chiefs. Stalin's empire was centralized like no other and, particularly after the Great Purge, the mechanism of state government was built in such a way that any order was immediately transmitted from the highest level down to the lowest functionaries, who rigorously carried it out. The large-scale operations in 1939 involving the arrest and elimination of Yezhov's supporters, and the actual replacement of the entire directorate of the secret police, were carried out quickly and effectively, in such a way that no one outside ever decoded the signal to begin the operations, or knew how or when Stalin gave the signal to set them in motion.

If Stalin, in June 1941, had had ideas to put before millions of functionaries without delay, why did he not avail himself of that smooth machine of government, which would transmit any order immediately and without distortion? If it were a statement of some gravity, it could be duplicated on secret channels. The TASS report, according to Marshal of the Soviet Union A. M. Vasilevsky, 'was not followed by any new policy

instructions about the armed forces, or by any review of previously taken decisions'. (A. M. Vasilevsky: *Delo Vsei Zhizni*, Moscow IPL 1973, p. 120). The Marshal goes on to say that it changed nothing in the work of the General Staffer of the People's Commissariat for Defence. Indeed, 'it was essential that nothing should change'.

No confirmation of the TASS report was sent along secret military channels. On the contrary, there are documents which show that, at the same time as the TASS report was published, an order was given to the troops in the military districts, including the Baltic Special Military District, which in both sense and spirit was directly contrary to the TASS report. (Archiv MO SSSR, Archive 344, schedule 2459, item n, p. 31) The material published in military newspapers, especially those which are unavailable to outsiders, was also in direct conflict to the content of the TASS report. (See for example Vice-Admiral I. I. Azarov; *Osazhdennaya Odessa*, Moscow Voenizdat)

The TASS report was not only out of keeping with Stalin's character; it did not tally with the central idea of all communist mythology. Throughout his entire life, any communist tyrant, and especially Stalin, constantly repeats a simple and eminently comprehensible sentence: 'The enemy is watching.' This magic sentence explains the absence of meat in the shops, the 'liberation campaigns', censorship, torture, mass purges and closed frontiers. Phrases like 'the enemy is on the watch' and 'we are surrounded by enemies' are not just ideology; they are the sharpest weapon the Party has. This weapon destroyed all forms of opposition. Yet once, and only once in the history of all communist regimes, the head of the most powerful of them all told the whole world that the threat of aggression did not exist.

13 June 1941 was one of the most important dates in Soviet history. Its significance is considerably greater than that of 22 June 1941, and Soviet generals, admirals and marshals describe this date in their memoirs in far more detail. 'On 13 June 1941,' wrote Lieutenant-General N. I. Biryukov, who at the time was a major-general in command of the 186th Rifle Division belonging to the 62nd Rifle Corps in the Urals Military District, 'the Military District headquarters sent us a directive of special importance, which ordered the division to leave for a "new camp". The address of the new quartering was not even communicated to me, the

commander of the division. I only learnt on a trip to Moscow that our division was to be concentrated in the woods to the west of Idritsa.' (*VIZH* 1962, No. 4, p. 80)

In peacetime, a division holds secret and sometimes top-secret documents. A document graded 'of special importance', however, can be sent to a division only in wartime, and only in exceptional circumstances where operations of extreme importance are being planned. Many Soviet divisions passed through the war without ever holding even one document with this highest secrecy grading. The fact that Biryukov chose to put inverted commas around the words 'new camp' is also significant.

The 186th Division was not the only one in the Urals Military District which received this order: *all* the divisions in the district received it. The official history of the district (*Krasnoznamennyi Ural'sky*, Moscow Voenizdat 1983, p. 104) records how 'the loading began of the 112th Rifle Division. The military train left the small railway station on the morning of 13 June . . . Other military trains followed. Then the entrainment began of units belonging to the 98th, 153rd, and 186th Rifle Divisions.' The 170th and 174th Rifle Divisions, along with artillery, sapper, anti-aircraft and other units were got ready for departure. Headquarters of the two corps were set up to handle the Urals divisions. These headquarters in turn came under the command of the headquarters of the new 22nd Army, whose commanding officer was Lieutenant-General F. A. Ershakov. Covered by the soothing TASS report, this great mass of headquarters and troops moved off secretly for the forests of Byelorussia.

The 22nd Army was not the only one on the move: 'Just before the war began, additional forces were assembled for posting in the strictest secrecy to the frontier districts. Five armies were moved westwards from the heart of the country.' (General S. M. Shtemenko, *General'nyi shtab v Gody Voyny*, Moscow Voenizdat 1968, p. 26)

General S. P. Ivanov adds that 'while this move was in progress, a further three armies were prepared for redeployment'. (*Nachal'nyi Period Voyny*, Moscow Voenizdat 1974, p. 211)

The question now arises as to why all eight armies did not move at the same time. The answer is simple. The large-scale secret transfer of Soviet troops westwards took place in March, April and May. The country's entire railway transport was involved in this vast secret operation. It was completed on time, but tens of thousands of wagons had to be sent back across thousands of kilometres of railway. Therefore on 13 June,

when another secret large-scale transfer of troops began, the armies found that there were not enough railway wagons available.

It is almost impossible to give the scale of these troop movements, as we do not have exact figures. Some idea of the size of the operation can be gathered from published accounts, however:

In May and early June, the transport system of the USSR had to move about 800,000 reservists . . . these movements had to take place secretly. (I. V. Kovalev, formerly Deputy People's Commissar for State Control, *Transport v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine*, Moscow Nauka 1981, p. 41)

In May ... an airborne assault corps was concentrated near Zhitomir and in the forests to the south-west of it. (Colonel-General I. I. Lyudnikov, *VIZH* 1961, No. 9, p. 66)

Marshal Bagramyan, based in the Kiev Special Military District at the time, later recalled how

The headquarters of the 31st Rifle Corps from the Far East was to arrive on 25 May to join the troop complement here ... in the second half of May the General Staff sent us a directive instructing us to accept the headquarters of the 34th Rifle Corps, four divisions, each with a strength of 12,000 and one mountain rifle division, all coming from the Northern Caucasus Military District . . . Almost a whole army had to be billeted in a very short space of time ... at the end of May, one military train after another began to arrive in the district. The operations branch changed into something resembling a movements office, into which all information flowed about the arriving troops. (*VIZH* 1967, No. I, p. 62)

The situation was very similar on 13 June, when another secret re-grouping of troops began. These were to form the Second Strategic Echelon of the Red Army. I now have information about 77 divisions and a very great number of regiments and battalions who had secretly begun to move westwards under cover of the TASS report.

Lieutenant-General of Artillery G. D. Plaskov, who was a colonel at the time, has given a vivid description of the events of that day:

The 53rd Division, in which I was officer in command of artillery, was deployed on the Volga. Our senior Command Staff were summoned to the headquarters of our 63rd Corps.

V. F. Gerasimenko, the commander of the District, came to the meeting. The arrival of the top brass put everyone on his guard, for it meant that something important was in the offing. A. G. Petrovsky, the corps commander, who was usually a quiet unruffled man, was noticeably agitated.

'Comrades,' he said. 'The corps has been ordered to mobilize fully. We must bring our units up to their full war-establishment strength, for which emergency reserves are to be used. We must call up our remaining reserve complement immediately. Major-General V. S. Bensky, the chief of staff of the corps, will give you the plan with the loading rota, the military trains available, and times of departure.'

The meeting did not last long. Everything was clear. And although General Gerasimenko hinted that we were going off on an exercise, everyone knew that the matter was much more serious than that. A full complement of combat equipment had never before been taken off on a training exercise. Nor were people called up from the reserve . . . (*Pod Grokhot Kanonady*, Moscow Voenizdat 1969, p. 125)

The First Strategic Echelon, meanwhile, which had entrained for the frontier regions earlier in the year, was being moved right up to the frontier itself. On 14 June the military council of the Odessa Military District was ordered to establish the headquarters of the 9th Army in Tiraspol (*VIZH* 1978, No. 4, p. 86), and the Military Council of the Baltic Special Military District ratified a plan to redeploy a number of divisions and detached regiments in the frontier area. (*Soviet Military Encyclopedia*, Moscow, Vol. 6, p. 517)

General S. P. Ivanov recalls that

while troops were being moved from the depth of the country, a covert regrouping began of formations inside the military districts on the frontier. Formations were moved nearer the frontier, under the guise of changing the locations of summer camps . . . Most formations were moved at night . . . (*Nachal'nyi Period Voyny*, Moscow Voenizdat 1974, p. 211)

Many other officers corroborate his account of these events. Major-General S. Iovlev, who was then commander of the 64th Rifle Division of the 1st Army's 44th Rifle Corps, wrote that 'on 15 June 1941 General D. G. Pavlov, the officer commanding the Western Special Military District, ordered the divisions in our corps to prepare to redeploy in full complement . . . We were not told where our destination was . . .' (*VIZH* 1960, No. 9, p. 56)

According to Colonel-General L. M. Sandalov, who was then a colonel and chief of staff of the 4th Army of the Western Special Military District, 'a new division, the 75th Rifle, appeared on the southern wing of the 4th Army. It had been moved up from Mozyr' and had put up heavily camouflaged tent encampments in the forests. (*Perezhitoe*, Moscow Voenizdat 1966, p. 71)

The official history of the Kiev Military District states that on 14 June, 'Major-General F. F. Alyabushev's 87th Rifle Division was moved up to the state frontier under the guise of exercises.' (*Kievsky Krasnoznamennyi*, Moscow Voenizdat 1974, p. 162)

The method of moving troops up to the frontier under the guise of exercises is not adopted on local initiative. Marshal Zhukov's recollections make it clear that the order came from above:

S. K. Timoshenko, the People's Commissar for Defence, recommended to the officers commanding the troops in the military districts that they have their formations carry out tactical exercises beside the state frontier so that, in accordance with the plan for cover, troops could be moved up nearer to their areas of deployment. The districts carried out this recommendation from the People's Commissar but with one vital

proviso - a significant part of the artillery did not take part in these movements. (G. K. Zhukov, *Vospominaniya i razmyshleniya*, Moscow APN 1969, p. 242)

Marshal of the Soviet Union K. K. Rokossovsky, then commander of the 9th Mechanized Corps, explains why the troops had moved up to the state frontier without artillery; the artillery had been ordered up to the frontier a short time before. (*Soldatsky Dolg*, Moscow Voenizdat 1968, p. 8)

According to Marshal Kirill Meretskov, then a general and Deputy People's Commissar for Defence, 'an exercise of the mechanized corps was carried out on my orders. The corps was brought up to the frontier area in training order, and it stayed there. I then said to Zakharov that Major-General R. Ya. Mali-novsky's corps was also in the district, and that it too had to be brought up to the frontier area during the exercises.' (*Na Slyzhbe Narodu*, Moscow IPL 1968, p. 204)

Marshal Rodion Malinovsky, then a major-general in command of the 48th Rifle Corps of the Odessa Military District, confirms that this order was carried out. 'As early as 7 June, the corps had left the Kirovograd area for Bel'tsy, and it was already in place by 14 June. This displacement was carried out under the guise of large-scale exercises.' (*VIZH* 1961, No. 6, p. 6)

Marshal Bagramyan has said that 'we had to prepare all the operational documentation needed for moving five rifle and four mechanized corps out of the areas where they were stationed permanently into the frontier zone'. (*Tak Nachinalas' Voina*, Moscow Voenizdat 1971, p. 64) 'On 15 June we were ordered to begin moving all five rifle corps to the frontier . . . They took with them everything necessary for combat operations. For the purposes of secrecy, these movements took place only at night.' (*Ibid*, p. 77)

Colonel-General I. I. Lyudnikov, then a colonel in command of the 200th Rifle Division of the 31st Rifle Corps, was one of those who carried out this order. 'The Military District's directive,' he recalled, 'which arrived in divisional headquarters on 16 June 1941, gave the order to set out on the march . . . with full complement . . . and to concentrate in the forest some 10-15 kilometres to the north-east of the frontier town of Kovel'. The order was that the move should be carried out covertly, and only by night, through forest-covered terrain.' (*Skvoz' Grozy*, Donetsk, Donbass, 1973, p. 24)

It was not only armies, corps and divisions that were moved to the state frontiers. There are hundreds of pieces of evidence to show that much smaller sub-units were also transferred there.

Lieutenant-General V. F. Zotov, for example, then a major-general and chief of the SZF (North-Western Front) engineering troops, reported that 'the sapper battalions were fully mobilized on a wartime footing . . . ten battalions which had come from the Far East were armed to the full'. (*Na Severo-Zapadnom Fronte*, Moscow Nauka 1969, p. 172)

Colonel S. F. Khvalei, then deputy commander of the 202nd Motorized Division of the 8th Army's I2th Mechanized Corps, stated that 'on the night of 18 June 1941, our division set out on field exercises'. (*Na Severo-Zapadnom Fronte*, Moscow Nauka 1969, p. 310) The colonel adds that by the time the war began, the sub-units of the divisions found themselves directly behind the frontier security detachments, in the immediate proximity of the state frontier.

A brief excerpt from the operational order issued on 18 June 1941 to Colonel I. D. Chernyakhovsky has been published in the Soviet Union. Chernyakhovsky, who was later to become a general of the army, was then the commander of the tank division of the same I2th Mechanized Corps.

On receipt of this order the Commander of the 28th Tank Division Colonel Chernyakhovsky is to bring all units to a state of combat preparedness in accordance with the battle alert plans, but the alert itself is not to be declared. Everything is to be carried out quickly, but noiselessly, without panic or careless talk, and the prescribed levels must be attained in both individual portable reserves and transportable reserves which will be needed for physical sustenance and battle . . . (*VIZH* 1986, No. 6, p. 75)

It is a great pity that the whole order was not published. It remains just as much a secret as it was half a century ago. According to captured German documents, their first encounter with the 28th Tank Division took place near Shaulya. But that division had been given the task of moving right up to the frontier itself.

Marshal of Armoured Tank Troops P. P. Polyboyarov, then a colonel and chief of the motorized armoured tank headquarters of the North-Western Front, stated that

'the division (the 28th Tank) had to leave Riga for a position on the Soviet—German frontier.' (*Na Severo-Zapadnom Fronte*, Moscow Nauka 1969, p. 114) The German invasion simply caught this division, like many others, on the way to the frontier.

In my private library there are sufficient documents on the movements of troops towards the frontiers to fill several voluminous books. Let us try to bear in mind the overall picture that emerges from this mass of detail. The First Strategic Echelon had in all 170 divisions, either tank, motorized, cavalry or rifle; 56 of these were stationed right up against the state frontiers.

The remaining 114 divisions of the First Strategic Echelon were lying inside the territory of the western frontier districts, within moving distance of the frontier. One question interests us - how many of these 114 divisions began to move towards the frontiers under cover of that soothing TASS report? The answer is that they all did. 'Between 12 and 15 June, the western military districts were ordered to move all divisions in the interior of the country into positions closer to the state frontiers.' (V. Khvostov, Major-General A. Grylev, *Kommunist* 1968, No. 12, p. 68) To these 114 divisions of the First Strategic Echelon we may add the 77 divisions of the Second Strategic Echelon which, as we already know, had either begun to move westwards, or else were preparing to do so.

The 13 June 1941, therefore, marks the beginning of the greatest displacement of troops in the history of civilization. The TASS report, published on the same day, speaks not only about German intentions, but also about Soviet plans:

Rumours to the effect that the Soviet Union is preparing for war with Germany are false and provocative . . . the summer training courses now being held for Red Army reservists, as well as the impending manoeuvres, have as their purpose nothing more than the training of reservists and testing how the railway system

works. It is general knowledge that they are held every year, and it is therefore absurd, to say the least, to portray these measures as hostile to Germany.

When this declaration is compared with what in fact was actually happening, we discover that the words used do not always tally with the facts.

The TASS report attempts to explain these troop movements as 'testing the railway system'. Let us beg leave to doubt this. The Soviet troop movements began in February. They were stepped up in March, reached enormous proportions in April and May, and became truly all-embracing in June. These movements involved those divisions which had already been moved up close to the German frontier; those which were preparing to invade Iran; and those which had remained in the Far East. The full build-up of Soviet troops on the German frontier was planned to have been completed by July. (General of the Army S. P. Ivanov, *Nachalnyi Period Voyny*, Moscow Voenizdat 1974, p. 211) The railways, which were the country's principal means of transport, were paralysed for almost six months by these secret military movements. In the first half of 1941, all the indices in the State Plan were disrupted, except the military ones. The principal reason for this was transport. The second was the covert mobilization of the male population into the new armies which were then being formed. It is surely not quite right to use the term 'testing' to describe such widespread disruption of the State Plan.

The TASS Report describes these manoeuvres as 'the usual exercises', but the accounts of Soviet marshals, generals and admirals refute this. Major-General S. Iovlev, for example, recalled how 'these call-ups for training were so unusual, and had not been provided for in military training plans, that they put people on their guard'. (*VIZH* 1960, No. 9, p. 56)

Vice-Admiral Ilya Azarov has pointed out that 'as a rule, training exercises were held nearer to autumn, and here they were beginning in the middle of the summer'. (*VIZH* 1962, No. 6, p. 77) Colonel-General I. Lyudnikov backs this up: 'Reservists are usually called up after the harvest has been gathered in ... This rule was broken in 1941.' (*VIZH* 1966 No. 9, p. 66)

General Mikhail Kazakov was in the General Staff at the time and personally met Lieutenant-General Mikhail Ferdorovich Lukin and other commanders who had been secretly sent to the Soviet western frontier.

He is quite categoric that, 'it was clear that it was not manoeuvres they were going on'. (*Nad Kartoi Bylykh Srazheny*, Moscow Voenizdat 1971, p. 64)

Let us note that all these marshals and generals use the term 'under the guise of exercises'. The pretence that these movements were exercises simply concealed the true purpose of this regrouping and build-up of Soviet troops. But nobody has ever said what this true purpose was. Four decades after the war ended, the true aim of these troop movements still remains a Soviet state secret.

At this point the reader might suggest that the reason for all this was that Stalin perhaps sensed that something hostile was afoot, and concentrated these troops there for defensive purposes. But these preparations had nothing to do with defensive measures. Troops who are preparing for defence dig themselves in. This is an inviolable rule, which every Soviet non-commissioned officer has taken to heart ever since the Russo-Japanese War, and all the wars which followed it. The first thing which troops who are preparing for defence do is to cover the widest fields over which the enemy will advance, cover the roads, put up barbed-wire entanglements, dig anti-tank ditches, and erect defensive and cover installations behind water defences. But the Red Army did nothing like this. As we have seen, the Soviet divisions, armies and corps pulled down the defensive installations which had been erected previously. The troops were not concentrated *behind* the water defences, as is done to aid defence, but *in front* of them, which can only aid attack. Soviet troops did not intercept these wide fields which would suit an enemy advance. They hid in the forests instead, just as those German troops were doing as they themselves prepared to attack.

But were not all these measures perhaps just a display of power? Of course not; to be effective, such a display must have been visible to the enemy. The Red Army was not giving a display but, quite the reverse, was trying to conceal its preparations. The TASS report was not written to frighten the enemy, but to set his mind at rest.

It is striking how the German Army was doing exactly the same thing in those days. It moved up to the border and hid in the forests, but these movements were very difficult to hide. Soviet reconnaissance aircraft flew over German territory 'by mistake'. But no one shot them down. Nor was it only ordinary pilots who flew over German territory. Commanders of much more senior rank made these flights as well. Air Major-General G. N. Zakharov, who commanded the 43rd Fighter Division of the Western Special Military District, looked down upon German troops from above and said 'one had the impression that there was being generated, in

the depth of this vast territory, movement which came to a halt at the frontier, pushing against it as against some invisible barrier, and ready at any moment to pour over the top'. (*Povest' ob Istrebitelyakh*, Moscow, Izd DOSAAF 1977, p. 43)

Interestingly, German pilots also flew over Soviet territory 'in error', and nobody shot them down either. I have found in old captured archives impressions given by a German pilot who describes the Soviet troops in exactly the same words. The accounts of Soviet officers are fully corroborated by German military intelligence: prior to 22 June 1941, the Red Army was moving towards the frontier in a massive tide.

Many other independent sources say the same thing. Georgy Alexandrovich Ozerov was one of the deputies to Andrei Nikolaiyevich Tupolev, the aircraft designer. In June 1941, he was in prison along with Tupolev and his entire design team. Ozerov later wrote a book that was distributed in the Soviet Union in *samizdat* form, by-passing the usual censorship. From there it reached the West, where it was published in Germany. Ozerov's account captures the awesome rhythm of the Red Army's massive movement towards its western border, which made itself felt even in Soviet prisons. 'People living in houses on the roads of Byelorussia and Windau,' he wrote, 'are complaining that they cannot sleep at night for the noise of trains laden with tanks and guns rumbling past.' (*Tupolevskaya Sharaga*, Frankfurt-am-Main, Posev, 1973, p. 90)

After my first articles on this subject were published, I received many letters which give a picture of the enormous movement westwards of Soviet troops. People of the most varied nationalities and types wrote to me: Estonians, Jews, Poles, Moldavians, Russians, Latvians, Germans, Hungarians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Romanians. All of them for a variety of reasons were in the 'liberated' territories at the time. The war was later to scatter these people to the four corners of the earth. Their letters come from Australia, the United States, France, Germany, Argentina, West Germany, and even from the Soviet Union. I received a letter from someone in Canada who had been a soldier in the Russian Liberation Army. He was in the Red Army in 1941, was sent to the frontier, and was hiding with his regiment in the forests in the border area when he was caught by the war. He was taken prisoner, joined the Russian Liberation Movement, was taken prisoner again, and escaped to spend a long life under strange names in strange lands. The soldier showed me several books written by former commanders and troops of the Russian Liberation Army (ROA), who miraculously survived after the war. Interestingly, they all begin their books from the moment when Soviet troops began to move towards the border.

Many other witnesses, and people who knew them well, have written to scientific journals, and on occasions some of these letters are published. James Rushbrook, a British citizen, draws attention to a book entitled *The Promise Which Hitler Kept*, written in 1944 by Stefan Stsende, and published in 1945 in Sweden. The author is a Polish Jew who was in L'vov in 1941. Here is his impression of these days which preceded 22 June:

Military trains crammed full of troops and military equipment passed with increasing frequency through L'vov heading westwards. Motorized units drove through the main streets of the town, and at the railway station all traffic was purely military. (RUSI, June 1986, p. 88)

I am grateful to all those who write to me and to journals, as they keep adding new fragments to the picture of the Red Army's general movement westwards. In addition, there are thousands of documents preserved in Soviet archives which bear out what I say. Very few people have access to these archives, and the most interesting documents have long since been destroyed. Traces of this destruction are all too apparent; sometimes as many as a hundred pages may be missing from a document. (Even so, I ask those who work in the archives to pay heed to the enormous amount of confirmation which exists there of these Soviet troop displacements westwards. I do not ask you to publish the corroboration you find, but simply that you yourselves bear it in mind, for your own personal interest.) In addition to secret archives, there is an ample supply of overt official publications, including the histories of the Soviet military districts, armies, corps and divisions. Anyone interested in this subject can quickly find thousands of statements like this one:

Even before the war began, on the instructions of the General Staff of the Red Army some formations of the Western Special Military District began to move up to the state frontier. (*Krasnoznamennyi Byelorussky Voennyyi Okrug*, Moscow Voenizdat 1983, p. 88)

Should anyone consider all these sources to be unreliable, there is one corroboration which it is impossible to refute: the subsequent history of the war itself. After the Germans had routed the First Strategic Echelon and broken its defences, their advance units suddenly came up against new divisions, corps and armies - such as the 16th Army near Shepetovka - whose existence the German commanders had not even suspected. The whole *Blitzkrieg* plan had been built on the calculation that the Soviet troops stationed right on the frontier would be routed by a lightning strike. But once it had successfully carried that plan into effect, the German Army then discovered itself up against another wall of armies which had moved up from beyond the Volga, the Northern Caucasus, the Urals, Siberia, Trans-Baikal and the Far East. Thousands of railway wagons were needed for one army alone. They had to be brought up to the stations for loading, and then the troops, heavy armament, vehicles and supplies all had to be put on the trains and then transported across thousands of kilometres. If the German troops encountered Siberian, Urals and Trans-Baikal armies at the end of June, this means that their transfer to the west must have begun, not on 22 June, but earlier.

While this was going on Soviet naval forces were also on the move. The official Estonian history of the war states that the Soviet Baltic Fleet left the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland on the eve of hostilities. (*Estonian People and the Great Patriotic War*, Tallinn Eesti Raamat 1973, Vol. I, p. 143) Let us look at the map. If the fleet emerged from the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland it had only one direction to go in, westwards. It was certainly not sailing on an exercise; its task 'was actively to work on the enemy's sea communications'. (*Ibid*) The war had not yet begun, Stalin still did not know that Hitler was going to attack him, yet a Soviet fleet had already left its base with the combat task of active offensive operations!

At the same time, transfers from one air base to another were proceeding at an intensive rate in the air forces. Whole air divisions and regiments, flying at night and in small groups in the guise of carrying out exercises, redeployed to airfields, some of which were less than 10 kilometres from the frontier. It was not just combat sub-units of the air force which were being sent westwards. There were also, in increasing numbers, the latest types of aircraft which had not yet been given to any regiments or divisions. Colonel-General L. M. Sandalov recalled that 'We began to receive new operational technical armament from 15 June onwards. The Korbin and the Pruzhan fighter regiments were given Yak-1 fighters armed with cannon; the ground-attack

regiment was given 11-2 aircraft, and the bomber regiment Pe-2s.' (*Na Moskovskom Napravleny*, Moscow Nauka 1970, p. 63)

At that time fighter regiments each had 62 fighter aircraft, 63 ground-attack aircraft and 60 bombers each. One division alone (the 10th Mixed Aircraft Division) expected to be given 247 of the latest aircraft. Sandalov also states that when the division began receiving the new aircraft, the old ones were not phased out. In this way the division was turned into a great fighting machine numbering several hundred aircraft. Archival documents show that this process was going on everywhere. The 9th Mixed Aircraft Division, for instance, which was located alongside and had also been moved up close to the frontier, had 409 aircraft, including 176 of the latest MIG-3s and also a few dozen Pe-2s and I1-2S. But new aircraft kept on coming.

On the morning of 22 June, the same Western Front was ordered to accept 99 MIG-3 aircraft at Orsha airfield. (*Komando-vanie i Shtab VVS v VO V*, Moscow Nauka 1977, p. 41) If they were ordered to accept them on the morning of 22 June, then obviously the aircraft were ready for sending on the evening of 21 June. Chief Air Marshal A. A. Novikov has stated that on 21 June, the Northern Front (where he was then Officer Commanding VVS¹⁰ with the rank of air major-general) was given an echelon of MIG-3 fighters. (VIZH1969, No. 1, P. 61)

In addition to the fighter aircraft, there was a solid flow of tanks, artillery, ammunition and fuel: 'A military train carrying a heavy artillery regiment arrived for off-loading at the Shaulyai station at dawn on 22 June.' (*Bitva za Leningrad*, Moscow Voenizdat 1964, p. 22) Not just one military train, of course, and not only with guns: 'By the end of June 1941, there were 1,320 trains laden with motor vehicles standing on the railways.' (VIZH 1975, No. I, p. 81) The standard weight for a military train at that time was 900 tons (45 wagons each weighing 20 tons). Assuming that there was one vehicle to every wagon, this would mean that at least 59,400 vehicles were expected to be offloaded. However, it often happened that, in conditions where an enemy attack has not been foreseen (and this one was not foreseen), the vehicles were loaded 'like a snake', that is with the front wheels of each vehicle placed on the body of the one in front. In this way an increased number of vehicles can be loaded onto one train.

¹⁰ Soviet Air Force.

Someone must have gathered together this great quantity of railway wagons and motor vehicles, loaded the vehicles on to the wagons, and conveyed them across a vast distance to the western frontier. This process clearly began before the war started. Yet no one succeeded in unloading these vehicles. Meanwhile, military trains carrying ammunition kept arriving one after the other in a never-ending stream. The *Red Star* newspaper wrote on 28 April 1985 that 'on the evening of 21 June 1941, the manager of that sector of railway lines controlled by the Liepaja station was told to "accept a special train. It's carrying ammunition. It has to be sent on to its destination at the first opportunity."' At that time Liepaja was very close to the frontier. The train was in transit, and there was nowhere it could have been bound for except the frontier itself.

Ammunition was held in great quantities in railway wagons on all fronts. This is usually done before preparing for an offensive in great depth. It is simpler, more reliable and cheap in a defensive war to keep ammunition in previously prepared defensive positions. When they have used up the ammunition at one defensive position, the troops can easily and quickly withdraw to the second position with its previously prepared supply of ammunition, and then to a third position and so on. But before an offensive, ammunition is stored on mobile transport, which is a very expensive and dangerous thing to do. 'At the small railway station of Kalinovka alone, the South-West Front had 1,500 wagons laden with ammunition.' (*Sovetskie Zheleznodorozhniki v Gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voyny*, Izd. AN. SSSRI963, p. 36)

I have much material showing how military trains laden with ammunition were saved in 1941. It did not of course prove possible to save them all. Artillery Colonel-General Ivan Ivanovich Volkotrbenko relates that in 1941 the Western Front alone lost 4,216 wagons carrying ammunition. (*VIZH*, No. 5, 1980, p. 71) But there was not just one front, but five, and the Western Front was not alone in losing ammunition wagons. Let us try to imagine the amount of ammunition on all five fronts which fell into enemy hands, and the amount which was able to be saved. In the middle of June, under cover of the TASS statement, all this ammunition was rolling in closed wagons straight for the German frontier.

Marshal of the Soviet Union Simion Konstantinovich Kur-kotkin reports that at the beginning of June, 'on a proposal from the General Staff, the Soviet government approved a plan to shift 100,000 tons of fuel from the interior regions of the country'. (*Tyl Vooruzhennykh Sil SSR v VOV*, Moscow Voenizdat 1977, p. 59) Other decisions similar to this one were apparently also being taken. 'About 8,500 railway cistern wagons, all containing fuel, piled up at railway junctions and even at halts between stations.' (*Ibid*, p. 173) Assuming that

only the smallest 20-ton cistern wagons were used, then we are not just speaking about 100,000 tons, but of a much greater quantity. The usual cistern wagon in use in 1940 was not of 20 tons, but of 62 tons. Consequently we can see that there were huge quantities of fuel involved here. But these 8,500 were only those cistern wagons which were standing at stations in the early days of the war, waiting to be off-loaded. We must also take into account what had already been destroyed at railway stations by the enemy air force as the war was breaking out. Colonel-General Ivan Vassilyevich Boldin, then a lieutenant-general and deputy officer commanding the Western Front, later remarked that the 16th Army, the most powerful in his front, had sufficient reserves of fuel in storage tanks and in railway cistern wagons, but that all this was lost in the first minutes and hours of the war. (*Stranitsy zhizni*, Moscow Voenizdat 1961, p. 92)

On the eve of war, this great mass of cistern tanks, along with trains laden with troops, technical equipment, arms and ammunition, was moving up to the frontier.

When we speak of the reasons for the Red Army's defeats in the initial period of the war, we sometimes forget the main reason, which is that the Red Army was in railway wagons at the time. General of the Army, Simion Pavlovich Ivanov, then a colonel in charge of the operations branch of the 13th Army headquarters, describes how Biryuzov's 132nd Rifle Division was caught unprepared:

The enemy suddenly attacked the train, in which part of the strength of the division, along with its headquarters, was bound for the frontier. They had to go into battle straight from the wagons and the railway platforms. (*Red Star*, 21 August 1984)

Marshal Biryuzov, then a major-general recalled the chaos that ensued:

We were added to the complement of the 20th Mechanized Corps at the very last minute. I could not find either the commander or the chief of staff of the corps, in fact I did not even know where their command post was. The 137th Rifle Division, under the command of Colonel I. T. Grishin, was operating to the left of us. It had come from Gor'kii . . . Our neighbour on our right was thrown into battle as we were, straight from the railway wagons, even before all their military trains had reached their off-loading points. (*Kogda Gremeli Pushki*, Moscow Voenizdat 1962, p. 21)

General of the Army, Sergei Shtemenko, then a colonel in the operations headquarters of the General Staff, reported that

troop trains were moving west and south-west in an uninterrupted stream. First one of us, then another went to the offloading stations. The ever-changing situation and its complexity often compelled the off-loading to be stopped and the trains to be sent on to some other station. It happened on occasions that the divisional command and its headquarters were off-loaded in one place, and the regiments in another, or even in several places all some considerable distance apart. (*General'nyi Shtab v Gody Voyny*, Moscow Voenizdat 1968, P. 30)

Soviet publications contain thousands of accounts of how the German attack found the Red Army in transit and unprepared for such an onslaught. Colonel-General A. S. Klemin recalled how, in early July 'there were 47,000 wagons carrying military loads moving on the railways'. (*VIZH* 1985, No. 3, p. 67)

'Many rail junctions were almost completely paralysed by this great accumulation of wagons. At most stations only one track was left free to allow other trains to pass through.' (I. V. Kovalev: *Transport v VO V*, Moscow Nauka 1981, p. 59)

It might be suggested that this vast mass of troops and equipment had been put on the trains after 22 June and then sent to the fronts. This is a mistaken proposition. After 22 June, the fronts needed empty wagons

only, to remove the vast reserves of arms, ammunition, fuel and other military supplies which had already been stockpiled at the border.

In order to realize the tragedy of the situation, one must remember General Lukin. He was already fighting near Shepetovka as officer commanding his army while the headquarters of his army was still in Trans-Baikal. The trains carrying his army were thousands of kilometres apart. Then the headquarters arrived, but its communications battalion was still somewhere on the way. Situations like this were occurring everywhere. Headquarters without troops were off-loaded at some stations, while troops without headquarters were off-loaded at others. It was worse when a train stopped in the open country instead of at a station. A tank battalion is a great force, but it is completely defenceless on a train. If the fighting caught a train laden with heavy technical armament at a place where there was nowhere to unload it, then the train either had to be destroyed or abandoned. The losses in military trains were enormous.

But even those divisions which were in the First Strategic Echelon and were making their own way to the frontier were in no better a position. A division marching in columns is an excellent target for any air force. The entire Red Army had made an excellent target of itself.

Many people saw the transfer of Soviet troops taking place, but each individual saw only a part of it. Few could have imagined its true scale. German military intelligence had assessed that a great build-up of fighting strength was taking place, but all it saw was the First Strategic Echelon, never suspecting that there was a second, and indeed a third, which we shall come to in another book. I believe that many Soviet marshals and generals, with the exception of the most eminent, or those who were directly involved in these troop transfers, likewise had no idea of their true dimensions, and consequently, of their significance. That is why many of them talk about them in so serene a manner. Their ignorance about the general situation and the true extent of the build-up of Soviet troops was in no way fortuitous. Stalin took draconian measures to cover it up. His TASS report was one of these measures. It was clearly impossible to conceal the actual fact that troop transfers were taking place. But amazingly Stalin succeeded in concealing both the dimensions of these transfers and their purpose from the entire country, from German intelligence and even from future generations.

Air Colonel-General Alexander Sergeiyeovich Yakovlev, who was a personal aide to Stalin at the time, bears witness that 'at the end of May or beginning of June' a meeting was held in the Kremlin to discuss matters related to camouflage and deception. (*TseV Zhizni*, Moscow IPL 1968, p. 252)

An incident recounted by Marshal Matvei Vassilyevich Zakharov reveals the degree of secrecy surrounding these troop movements:

At the beginning of June, Colonel P. I. Rumyantsev, the chief of VOSO¹¹ of the Odessa Military District, came round to see me in my office when I was chief of staff of the Odessa Military District and told me in secret that over the past few days 'Annushkas' had been passing through the Znamenka railway station from the Rostov direction and would be off-loaded near Cherkassy. 'Annushka' is a term which is used in the VOSO to mean a division. Two days later, I received an enciphered message from Cherkassy, signed by M. A. Reiter, deputy officer commanding the troops in the Northern Caucasus Military District, in which he asked permission to take over some clothing-storage hutments in our district for storing the belongings of troops which had just arrived in this area from the Northern Caucasus. As the headquarters of the Odessa Military District had not been informed about any concentration of troops here, I rang the operations headquarters of the General Staff on the VCh.¹² A. F. Anisov, the deputy chief of the headquarters came to the telephone. I told him about the enciphered message I had received from M. A. Reiter, and asked him to explain what it was all about. Anisov replied that I must destroy Reiter's message at once, that he (Reiter) would be given the necessary instructions from the General Staff, and that the Military District headquarters was not to interfere in this matter. (*Voprosy Istory*, 1970, No. 5, p. 42)

Marshal Zakharov also states that Colonel-General Yakov Timofeyevich Cherevichenko, who was commanding the troops in the Odessa Military District, likewise knew nothing about the 'Annushkas'. It may be argued that when Soviet troop movements take place, precautionary measures are always taken, and that Soviet troops always keep their intentions secret. This is quite true. But everything has a limit. An officer

¹¹ Central Office of Military Railway Communications.

¹² High-Frequency Governmental Communications.

commanding a military district in the Soviet Union - particularly one who commands a military district on the frontier - and his chief of staff are persons who have been invested with special plenary powers and authority. They take full responsibility for everything which takes place on the territory which is under their control. Even in the case where the commander of the Odessa military district learnt by chance that a concentration of outside troops was taking place on his territory, the General Staff, which was commanded by G. K. Zhukov, ordered him to forget the information he had been sent, and to destroy the secret enciphered message which had been intended only to be read by the military district chief of staff. This enciphered message represented a danger even as it lay in the chief of staff's safe.

Lieutenant-General M. A. Reiter's behaviour was interesting. Max Reiter was a disciplined German. He had been a colonel in the Russian Army in World War I, an old hand of Prussian stock. He knew very well how to keep a secret. But even he regarded it as perfectly natural, when he turned up with his 'Annushkas' on the territory of another military district, to get in touch with his counterpart and ask his permission (in personal coded message of course!) to do something. The General Staff quickly set his thinking straight, and he did not write a cipher message like that again.

Molotov summoned the German ambassador on 13 June and handed him the text of the TASS report. (V. Khvostov and Major-General A. Grilev, *Kommunist*, No. 12, 1968, p. 68) This stated that Germany did not wish to attack the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union did not wish to attack Germany, but that 'forces hostile to the Soviet Union and Germany which were interested in developing and extending the war' were trying to cause trouble between them by spreading provocative rumours that war was near. The report names these 'hostile forces' as Sir Stafford Cripps (the British ambassador in Moscow), London and the British press.

It would be reasonable to suppose that a meeting also took place that day in London between Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, and Ivan Maisky, the Soviet ambassador in London. Imagine the scene: Maisky throws the TASS report on the table, stamps his foot and demands that ambassador Cripps be withdrawn from Moscow, that the sowing of dissention between the good friends Stalin and Hitler should stop, and that provocative rumours about war between the Soviet Union and Germany should cease.

On 13 June 1941 a meeting did in fact take place between Maisky and Eden. Maisky did not hand over a copy of the TASS report to the British government, he did not stamp his foot, and the meeting passed off in a friendly atmosphere. The discussion was concerned with what measures the British government could take to help the Red Army 'should war break out between the Soviet Union and Germany in the near future'. Specific measures included direct combat operations by the Royal Air Force to help the Red Army, military supplies, and co-ordination of operations undertaken by the military commands of the two countries. (*Istoriya Vtovoï Mirovoi Voïny*, Vol. 3, p. 352)

On 13 June, Stalin's diplomats were laying the foundations of what would soon be called the Anti-Hitler Coalition. There was nothing wrong with this from the British side. Britain was at war with Germany. The Soviet Union, however, was playing a dirty game. It had concluded a non-aggression pact with Germany and, immediately after this, a treaty of friendship. If the Soviet government had decided that these documents were no longer relevant to a situation which had really become very complex, they should have abrogated them. But Stalin did not do this. He went on assuring Hitler of his ardent friendship and claimed in the TASS report that it was the British politicians who wanted to extend the war.

The neutral diplomatic tone concealed some highly serious matters. Soviet diplomats had quite recently held negotiations with Germany over Poland 'should changes occur on the territory of the Polish state'. The time had now come when Soviet diplomats were striking a similar tone about Germany behind her back. It is surprising that, in the negotiations in London, both sides used the phrase 'if war begins', instead of saying 'if Germany attacks'; to put it another way, the interlocutors were not in any way excluding the possibility that a war could begin, not as a result of German aggression, but in some other way. It is interesting that at the negotiations in London, the Soviet Union put itself down first — 'if war breaks out between the USSR and Germany'. The TASS report too, speaks of 'rumours that war is near between the USSR and Germany'. If Germany was considered the most likely aggressor, why not put it the other way round?

Someone may perhaps argue that the Soviet ambassador was holding these negotiations without Stalin's knowledge, exceeding his authority as did those Soviet generals who assembled their troops on the borders 'without notifying Stalin'. But Maisky himself has emphasized that when he was leaving for London in 1932, he had a meeting with M. M. Litvinov. Litvinov, who was People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, warned Maisky that while *en paste* he would be carrying out instructions, not from Litvinov, but 'from higher

instances'. Only Molotov, who was head of the government of which Litvinov was a member, and Stalin were 'higher' at that time. In 1941, Litvinov had already been dismissed, so there remained only two 'higher instances', Molotov and Stalin. Maisky survived the purges, and remained in his post for a very long time. His head remained on his shoulders only because he did not infringe any of the instructions sent him by the 'higher instances'.

In order to have a clear understanding of Comrade Maisky and Soviet diplomats generally, it must be added that after he returned to Moscow after having served in London for eleven years, he accompanied Stalin to conferences with Churchill and Roosevelt, in order to ask that aid be increased. He then wrote a book entitled *Who Helped Hitler? (Kto Pomogal Gitleru)*, Moscow IML 1962) We learn from this book that Hitler could not have begun World War II by himself, and that Britain and France helped him to do so. The Soviet ambassador then went on to lay the blame for 'suffering and sacrifices without number' on the shoulders of the country which offered Stalin military and economic help as far back as 13 June 1941.

The purpose of the TASS report was to put an end to rumours that war between the Soviet Union and Germany was inevitable. Stalin waged determined warfare on these rumours. On the night of 13-14 June, there was a sudden outburst of terror in Moscow. Heads came off, including some very eminent ones.

Hitler had the same problem. War preparations are difficult to conceal. People see them, and express all sorts of suppositions about them. On 24 April, the German naval attache sent an anxious report to Berlin that he was having to counter 'clearly absurd rumours about a forthcoming German-Soviet war'. On 2 May, ambassador Von der Schulenberg reported that he was having to counter rumours, but all German officials who were arriving from Germany were bringing 'not only rumours, but facts to back them up'. On 24 May, Karl Bohmer, head of the foreign press department of the German Ministry of Propaganda, got into a drunken state and said something indiscreet about relations with the Soviet Union. He was immediately arrested. Hitler took up the matter personally, and in Goebbels's words 'attached too serious a significance' to it. On 13 June, the day the TASS report was given out, Karl Bohmer stood before a people's court (how staggering - a people's court, just as in the Soviet Union) and declared that what he had said had been drunken gibberish.

This did not save the unfortunate Bohmer from heavy punishment, which served as a good lesson for all Germany – there would be no war! There would be no war! There would be no war! And just so that nobody abroad should have any doubts about it, Ribbentrop sent top-secret telegrams to his ambassadors on 15 June, saying that it was planned to hold highly important negotiations with Moscow. The ambassadors had to relay this information to certain people in the strictest secrecy. For instance, the counsellor at the German Embassy in Budapest had to convey the news to the Hungarian president as a special secret.

The principles of disinformation are the same for everyone. If you do not want the enemy to learn the secret, then keep it away from your friends as well! On 8 May 1940, German radio announced that Britain intended to invade the Netherlands. There then followed the most interesting part of the announcement, which was that information to the effect that two German armies had been moved up to the border with Holland was 'absurd rumour' put into circulation by 'British warmongers'. What happened thereafter is common knowledge. These two announcements, one from German radio and the other from the Soviet agency T A S S, repeat one another almost word for word.

Following the appearance of my first publications, Soviet historians exclaimed that yes, Soviet troop movements had taken place, but that Soviet sources had long ago given a satisfactory (that is, a defence-related) explanation of what had occurred. This is very far from the truth. It was the absence of such an explanation which attracted my attention in the first place. Not one Soviet marshal or general has ever given the exact number of the divisions which took part in these vast movements. As we have seen, it was 191, but not one of them has ever given even an approximate figure. But can we really expect a satisfactory explanation from a general if he does not know, or is concealing the true dimensions of everything which took place?

The memoirs of the generals and marshals who had either directed or taken part in these troop movements display a surprising flexibility on the part of Soviet historical science. Colonel-General Ya. T. Cherevichenko, officer commanding the troops of the Odessa Military District, was in the Crimea between 9 and 12 June, where he received the troops of the 9th Special Rifle Corps. We learn this from Marshal M. V. Zakharov.

(*Voprosy Istory*, 1970, No. 5, p. 44) We shall return to this corps later. It was a most unusual one, and it was not for nothing that it was officially named 'special'. But for some reason or other, General Cherevichenko passes it over in silence. This, incidentally, is the same Cherevichenko who was unaware that an entire army under the command of Lieutenant-General I. S. Konev and his deputy Lieutenant-General Max Reiter was secretly being concentrated on the territory of his own military district.

I. S. Konev became a marshal of the Soviet Union during the war, and I picked up his book in the hope of finding some explanation as to how he found himself with his 'Annushkas' in somebody else's military district, and why. Surprisingly, the gallant marshal has simply omitted the entire initial period of the war. He preferred to write about 1945, and so he entitled his book *Forty-Five*. I then picked up the memoirs of General of the Army P. I. Batov. It was his corps which Cherevichenko was meeting in the Crimea, but alas, Batov simply leaves out the facts. Batov was the deputy of the officer commanding the Trans-Caucasian Military District. What was he doing in the Crimea at the head of a corps on the eve of the war? Which divisions belonged to this corps? Why was the corps called 'special'? Who was the deputy commander of the corps, and who was its chief of staff? Why was the corps trained to board ships, land on a hostile coast, and destroy oil derricks? We can find answers to all these questions, after prolonged research, from many different sources, but these do not include the memoirs of Batov, who simply omits the entire period.

Having failed to find the explanations there, I then raised my sights. But neither Stalin nor any of the members of the Politburo wrote any memoirs. The only really senior figure to leave an account of his wartime experiences was Marshal Zhukov. He was Chief of the General Staff at the time, and was personally responsible for the deployment, garrisoning and movements of troops. Without his official stamp, it would have been impossible to move even one battalion, let alone regiments and divisions. What was more, the VOSO service, that is, everything related to the military use of the railways, was directly subordinated to him.

Zhukov admits that troop movements did in fact take place, and that they were of monumental dimensions. But instead of giving figures and explaining them from the height of his position as Chief of the General Staff, the three pages Zhukov devotes to the troop movements simply quote his friend I. Kh. Bagramyan, who was a colonel at the time. Listen to what Bagramyan thinks about this — Bagramyan who had no access to state secrets! Listen to Bagramyan, who was in the First Strategic Echelon where he only carried out orders sent by

Moscow, who only accepted one military train after another without being given any explanations as to what they were needed for.

Dear Georgy Konstantinovich, comrade Marshal of the Soviet Union! If we want to find out Ivan Khristoforovich Bagramyan's opinions, we shall simply open his excellent books and read them. But we are interested in finding out from your memoirs your point of view, your figures and your explanations. We want to see the situation from the dizzy height of your position and not from Ivan Khristoforovich's parochial post. He speaks well and at length. He possesses shining erudition, a fine analytical mind, an excellent memory and great knowledge of the situation. But he played no part in the troop movements, nor did he direct them. The troop movements were directed by you. Zhukov's sharp manoeuvre behind Bagramyan's back, and the lack of exact figures and explanations only strengthen the suspicion that not everything was straightforward, that not everything had been said, and that there was something here which, then as now, was not for publication.

CHAPTER 23

The Military Districts

There is a long-established procedure in the Red Army whereby the command leaves for the place where the operations are to take place before the troops arrive there.

Marshal K. ROKOSSOVSKY
(*Soldarsky dolg*, Moscow 1968, p.
166)

As the Soviet general moves up the promotional ladder, he passes in turn through the posts of commander of a division, commander of a corps, and then of officer commanding an army. The next post, officer commanding a military district, is not just a step upwards. It is a sharp quantum leap. The fact is that an officer commanding a military district is not simply a very high-ranking military chief; he is in his way the military governor of great territories where millions and indeed tens of millions of people live. He is not only responsible for the troops and their military training, but also for preparing the population, industry, transport and agriculture to fight a war. He is responsible for protecting the communist regime in the territories entrusted to him and, should the need arise, to resort to armed force to defend that regime.

Before World War II, the territory of the Soviet Union was divided into sixteen military districts. Eight of them had common frontiers with foreign states. The remaining eight had no frontiers and were therefore considered internal military districts. Each district, of course, was important in its own way. It was in the internal districts that vast industrial potential, transport arteries and great human resources were concentrated.

On 13 May 1941, the officers commanding seven of these internal military districts (the exception was the Moscow District) were given a directive of 'special importance'. The headquarters of the military districts were to be converted into army headquarters. The officers commanding the military districts were to head these armies personally; they were to take along with them all the corps and all the divisions which made up the

complement of their districts. Within exactly one month, on 13 June 1941, they were ordered to begin a secret regrouping in the western part of the country.

On 13 June 1941, under cover of the TASS report, all the divisions which belonged to the Urals Military District began to move secretly westwards. The divisions were combined into corps, and the corps were in turn combined into the 22nd Army. Lieutenant-General Filipp Ershakov, the officer commanding the Urals Military District, personally stood at the head of this army. Dimitri Sergeyevich Leonov, corps commissar and member of the Military Council of the District, and Major-General Georgy Ferdorovich Zakharov, Chief of Staff of the District, became respectively members of the Military Council and Chief of Staff in the emergent army. Officers in charge of artillery, engineers, the rear, communications and all the rest, took all those under their command into the 22nd Army, and put them aboard military trains which then moved off heading west.

Who then was to remain behind in the Urals? The Urals contained (and continue to contain) the world's largest steel, tank and shell production complexes. The Urals meant lines of communication of the utmost importance. The Urals also meant concentration camps, with hundreds of thousands and, quite possibly, millions of prisoners. Would it not be too dangerous to leave all these territories without a military governor? It might be suggested that every commander has a deputy who stands in for him during his absences. But the trouble here was that Lieutenant-General M. F. Lukin, the deputy officer commanding the Urals Military District, had already been given orders to leave for Trans-Baikal. He had set up the 16th Army there, and at the time when the TASS report was issued, his army was secretly moving westwards. After all the Command Staff had departed, therefore, the completely unknown Major-General A. B. Katkov was left in charge of the Urals Military District, with practically no staff to support him.

The same thing happened in the Khar'kov Military District. We know that the 18th Army was formed on the eve of the war on the Romanian frontier. The command and headquarters of this army was the command and headquarters of the Khar'kov Military District. Lieutenant-General A. K. Smirnov, the officer commanding the district, Major-General V. Ya. Kolpachki, its chief of staff, Major-General S. K. Goryunov, its air commander, and everyone under their command, were transferred to the 18th Army on the Romanian frontier, thereby leaving their military district without any leaders at all.

The 19th Army was formed from the troops and headquarters of the Northern Caucasian Military District. Lieutenant-General I. S. Konev, officer commanding the district, combined all the troops of his district into

the 19th Army, stood at its head and moved it westwards in secret, thereby leaving the district without any military control whatever. In theory Major-General Max Reiter, the German communist and Konev's deputy, should have taken his place, but as we are already aware, he was not in the Caucasus at the time, but in Cherkassy, where the military trains of the 19th Army were arriving.

Let us glance at the command staff of the Air Force (the V VS) in the North Caucasus Military District. The officer commanding the VVS was Air Major-General E. M. Nikolaenko, the VVS Chief of Staff was Colonel N. V. Korneev, the commander of the Fighter Air Division was Air Major-General E. M. Beletsky. We find them in exactly the same posts after the TASS report was published, but no longer in this military district. They were in the 19th Army, which was secretly being moved into the Ukraine.

The 20th Army, likewise, was simply the officers and troops of the Orel Military District under another name. Lieutenant-General F. N. Remezov, the officer commanding this district, combined all his troops with those of the Moscow Military District under his command. He turned the district headquarters into the headquarters of the 20th Army and moved secretly westwards, thereby leaving the heart of Russia at the mercy of fate and without any military control.

The 21st Army was the Volga Military District. The officer commanding the district, Lieutenant-General V. G. Gerasimenko, became officer commanding 21st Army, General V. N. Gordov, chief of staff in the district became 21st Army Chief of Staff. Commanders of all sorts of troops and services, and hundreds of other commanders, simply changed the words in their titles from 'Volga Military District' to '21st Army'. If for instance you were to learn that Air Chief Marshal G. A. Vorozheikin was head of the air forces in the Volga Military District at the beginning of June 1941 (with a lower rank at that time, of course), you could be absolutely sure without looking up the records that after 13 June he became Air Chief in the 21st Army and then moved to the German frontier. If you knew that Colonel-General Yu. V. Bordzilovsky, who commanded the engineering troops in the district, although of course with a lower rank, was serving at the same time and in the same place in the engineering branch, then you could say without fear of contradiction that after the TASS report came out, he served in the engineering branch of the 21st Army.

The 24th Army was formed in the Siberian Military District, whose commanding officer was Lieutenant-General S. A. Kalinin, while the 28th Army was formed from the Arkhangelsk Military District, under the command of Lieutenant-General V. Ya. Kachalov.

On 13 June 1941, the very same day that strange reports were being broadcast by Soviet radio, the established order of military and territorial government which had been in force in the vast territories of central Russia, Northern Caucasus, Siberia, the Urals from Arkhangelsk to Kuban' and from Orel to Chita to all intents and purposes ceased to exist. If a revolt had erupted, there was nothing there to suppress it. All divisions had gone off to the German frontier. What was more, there was nobody left to take a decision to put down a revolt. Practically all the generals had also gone off secretly to the western part of the country. Revolts were usually put down by the NKVD, but a very serious one would have been too much for the NKVD troops alone to handle. The army would have been needed.

The question now arises - what was going on? Did Stalin perhaps not trust his officers commanding in the internal military districts and decided to replace them all at the same time? No, it was not like that. Stalin took the precaution of shooting all those whom he did not trust, and replaced them with others in whom he had confidence. It is essential to realize that practically no one was left behind to take the places of the generals who had left. After Lieutenant-General S. A. Kalinin, the officer commanding the Siberian Military District, converted all his troops and his headquarters into the 24th Army, which he then secretly transported westwards, no new general arrived in Siberia until 1942. (*Soviet Military Encyclopedia*, Vol. 7, p. 338) In all other internal military districts, new commanding officers did not arrive for several months, or else those who came were third-rate generals who, either before or afterwards, were never given the honour of commanding a military district or an army. Major-General Matvei Timofeyevich Popov in the Volga Military District is a striking example of this.

It only remains for us to suppose that all commanders and their troops had gone off to do something more serious than protecting Soviet authority in the country's internal areas. If it had been contemplated that they should do something less important than this, they would of course all have stayed where they were.

Moscow was the exception among the eight internal military districts. This is understandable, as the capital lay within it. In contrast to all other internal military districts, it was commanded not by a lieutenant-general, nor even by a colonel-general, but by General of the Army Ivan Tyulenev. But even the exceptional position of the Moscow Military District did not save it from being denuded of its headquarters and troops. All its troops were sent to reinforce the First Strategic Echelon and the 20th Army of the Second Strategic Echelon. All reserves of arms, ammunition and property were sent from the Moscow Military District to the western

frontiers. Then came the turn of the command. At that time General I. V. Tyulenev held a very high rank, as well as enjoying Stalin's special trust; too high a rank for someone who was just to command an army. The Politburo therefore decided in Stalin's presence to appoint Tyulenev officer commanding the Southern Front. When he left for there, he took with him the Moscow Military District's entire headquarters, which was headed by Major-General Gavril Shishenin.

The decision to re-form the command and headquarters of the Moscow Military District into the command of the Southern Front and transfer them to Vinnitsa was taken on 21 June 1941, but there is sufficient evidence to show that this decision came as no surprise to the officers in the headquarters. Many branches of the headquarters were already on the move; Major-General A. S. Osipenko, for example, deputy officer commanding the air force of the Moscow Military District, was already on the Romanian frontier at the beginning of June 1941.

The command and headquarters left for Vinnitsa, effectively abandoning the military district of the capital city without handing over their duties to anyone, since nobody had been appointed to take the places of the departing commanders. Lieutenant-General P. A. Artem'ev did not take over its command until 26 June, *after* Germany had attacked. (*Ordena Lenina Moskovsky Voennyi Okrug*, Moscow, Moskovsky Rabochy 1985, p. 204) Artem'ev, moreover, was not a soldier but a Chekist. The post which he went on holding and brought along with him to the Moscow Military District was that of head of the Directorate of Operational Troops of the NKVD. Then in July, Stalin appointed K. F. Telegin, who was a divisional commissar for NKVD troops, and who later became a lieutenant-general, to be a member of the Military Council of the Moscow Military District. He also was a pure-blooded Chekist, who had previously served in OSNAZ units. During the Great Purge, he was political commissar for the NKVD internal troops of the Moscow District, and following that he held some responsible position inside the central apparatus of the NKVD.

Even during the Great Purge, the military districts had remained military. Now, in time of war, there was no difference between the Moscow Military District and the Moscow NKVD District. The Moscow Military District did exist in theory, but there were no Red Army military units in Moscow. There were only two NKVD divisions and 25 detached fighter battalions, also of the NKVD.

Lieutenant-General Konstantin Ferdorovich Telegin recalls that when these 'new people', that is the Chekists, first arrived in the Moscow Military District headquarters, many branches in the headquarters lost

much of their staff. The two most important branches, operations and intelligence, had completely ceased to exist. The new people had little understanding of the inherent characteristics of military matters, and they had to 'waste no small amount of time and effort learning about the state of the district and its problems and capacities'. (*VIZH*, 1962, No. I, p. 36)

Thus, under the cover of the TASS statement, the most high-ranking military commanders at the head of armies, and including even one who commanded a front, were secretly transferred to the German frontier, thereby leaving all the internal military districts at the mercy of fortune and the NKVD. It is beyond dispute that nothing like this has ever happened in Soviet history either before or since. It is also indisputable that these movements were connected with a war which, for the Soviet Union, was quite unavoidable. If there had been the slightest doubt that war might possibly be avoided, at least some commanders here and there would have remained at their posts.

Nor were these actions in any way preparations for a defensive war. In a lengthy defensive war, not all the commanders are sent off to the enemy frontier. Somebody stays behind in those territories where the enemy might suddenly appear. It is also absolutely essential in a prolonged defensive war that generals and real soldiers, and not policemen, remain in the most important industrial areas and transport centres, in order both to defend them and to ensure that the full potential of these great territories in the heartland of the country is fully and properly used to meet the needs of war.

There is only one circumstance in which the generals would have nothing to do in these industrial centres. That would be where the Soviet High Command was planning a sudden war on enemy territory, relying on reserves which had been mobilized before the war began, rather than on armaments to be produced in the course of it. In that event, their place would be on the enemy frontier.

Lieutenant-General K. F. Telegin himself makes the position quite clear: 'Insofar as it was supposed that the war would be fought on that enemy territory which, in the pre-war period, bordered the district, stockpiles of mobilized reserves of arms, equipment and ammunition were transferred to the military districts on the frontier.' (K. F. Telegin, *op. cit.*)

CHAPTER 24

The Black Divisions

*Stalin does not hesitate to use force on
an unprecedented scale.*

TROTSKY

(BO, Nos. 79-80, 1939.)

The main similarity between the First and Second Strategic Echelons was that the most powerful armies in their complements were deployed not against Germany but against the Romanian oilfields. The main difference between them was the colour of their uniforms. The colour of the First Strategic Echelon was the khaki of the tunics worn by millions of soldiers. Khaki was the dominating colour in the Second Strategic Echelon as well, but it had an abundant admixture of black.

I once had occasion to be present at a meeting with the retired General F. N. Remezov, who headed the 20th Army. A conversation was going on among members of his circle. No outsiders were present, so it was fairly frank. His listeners were officers and generals of the district headquarters, who knew their subject very well. They began to argue. At the height of the argument, a bold colonel with a sharp tongue put the question directly to General Remezov: 'Why do the Germans call the 69th Rifle Corps of your 20th Army the "black corps" in their documents?' General Remezov did not give an instructive reply. He deflected everything at the 56th Army, which he was later to command, saying that because of a shortage of grey military greatcoats, some of its divisions had to wear black railway overcoats. That did happen, but in December.

Remezov clearly evaded giving an answer. He was being asked about June 1941, when there were no shortages, and when it would have been too hot for soldiers in battle to run about in a greatcoat. Many soldiers in the 69th Rifle Corps wore black uniforms *in summer*. There were sufficient numbers of these soldiers to draw the attention of German military intelligence, who then unofficially called the 69th Corps the 'black corps'.

This was not the only corps of its kind. The 63rd Rifle Corps of the 2nd Army is also referred to in German documents as a 'black corps'. Komkor Leonid Grigoryevich Petrovsky, who commanded the 63rd Rifle Corps, was an outstanding military leader by any standards. He took part in the storming of the Winter Palace when he was fifteen, went through the entire Civil War and was seriously wounded three times. He finished the war as a commander of a regiment at the age of eighteen. When he was twenty, he passed out from the Academy of the General Staff in brilliant fashion. He commanded the best units in the Red Army, including the 1st Moscow Proletariat Rifle Division. At the age of 35 he was deputy officer commanding the Moscow Military District.

In battle, Komkor Petrovsky showed himself to be a military leader of strategic dimensions. He was given the rank of lieutenant-general in August 1941 and was appointed to command the 2nd Army. At that moment, the 63rd Rifle Corps, after much fierce fighting, found itself surrounded. Stalin ordered him to leave the corps and to take command of the army immediately. Petrovsky requested that this order be delayed for a few days, and sent back the aircraft sent to collect him full of wounded soldiers. Petrovsky extracted his black corps from its encirclement, and having done that, he went back into the enemy rear area to bring out another division from the encirclement. This was the 154th Rifle Division, under the command of Kombrig Ya. S. Fokanov. While he was breaking out, Petrovsky was fatally wounded. The German troops who found Petrovsky's body on the field of battle were ordered by their High Command to bury the Soviet general with full military honours. A large cross was erected over his grave bearing the inscription in German, 'Lieutenant-General Petrovsky, Commander of the Black Corps'.

Soviet sources confirm this unusual gesture. The operations of the 63rd black corps may be read about in detail in the *Military Historical Journal* (VIZH 1966, No. 6, p. 66) The *Soviet Military Encyclopedia* (Vol. 6, p. 314) confirms the accuracy of that article. References to Petrovsky's black corps may be found in Lieutenant-General of Artillery G. D. Plaskov's book, *Pod Grokhot Kanonady* (Voenizdat 1969, p. 163)

German intelligence also noticed the unusual black uniforms in other armies belonging to the Second Strategic Echelon. When these uniforms began to predominate over the usual green ones, regiments, divisions, and sometimes entire corps were referred to as 'black'. The 24th Army of the Second Strategic Echelon, which had secretly been moved from Siberia, was no exception. The Germans gave the name 'black' to some of its regiments and divisions during the fighting. But even before the divisions and corps of this

army joined in battle, some very interesting things were happening. At the end of June, the 24th Army was on the move across thousands of kilometres of railway track. Its commanding officer, Lieutenant-General Stepan Andreyevich Kalinin, was already in Moscow trying to solve the problem of how to feed it. He later recalled how he was received by the secretary of the Moscow Municipal Committee of the Party:

The secretary of the Moscow Municipal Committee rang up the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs.

'The comrade with whom I have just been talking,' explained the Municipal Committee secretary, when he had hung up, 'had considerable experience in organizing food catering. He was doing this type of work for a long time when the Volga-Moscow Canal was being built. He will help you.'

About twenty minutes later the tall stately figure of a commander of the NKVD troops came into the secretary's office. He wore three diamond-shaped badges on the collar of his soldier's blouse, which was pulled in round the waist by a tight belt. We quickly came to an agreement with him about everything. (*Razmyshleniya o Minuvshem*, Moscow Voenizdat 1963, pp. 132-133)

It is a pity that General Kalinin is shy about naming the secretary of the Moscow Municipal Council and the smart, tightly belted visitor with the three diamond-shaped badges.

After the very first battles, the 24th Army fell into the right hands. Its command was taken over by NKVD Major-General Konstantin Rakutin. And Lieutenant-General S. A. Kalinin returned to Siberia on Stalin's personal orders. Not to command the Military District, which was still abandoned, but to form ten new divisions.

The formations were to be set up in places where there had never been any units at all before. I had visited these places and got down to work.

My first excursion was to one of the Siberian towns. Some years before the war, a small town of hutments for lumberjacks had been built there in the backwoods of the forests. This was used to billet units of the formation which was being set up.

Impassable taiga surrounded the town almost on all sides. (*Ibid*, p. 182)

Everything one needs to know about 'the small town of hutments for lumberjacks' is contained in the three volumes of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *GULAG Archipelago*. Ten new divisions (more than 130,000 men) were set up in the Siberian Military District, not in places where military units had been previously, but in these 'small towns of hutments'. It may be argued that concentration-camp prisoners were not, of course, being turned into soldiers. General Kalinin was simply using the empty hutments to quarter the reservists who were arriving, and here they would be trained and turned into soldiers. Very well, let us accept that. Where then did the 'lumberjacks' go in that case? Why was the small town (and there was not just one) empty? The simple answer is that General Kalinin filled the ranks of the 24th Army with 'lumberjacks' *before the war* and prepared it in secret to be sent off westwards. That is why the regiments and divisions in this army, and in all other armies of the Second Strategic Echelon, wore black. The 'lumberjacks' were frequently not even re-clothed in military uniform. That is why the army which Kalinin secretly transferred to the western part of the Soviet Union was maintained by the Chief Directorate of Camps, or GULAG, of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, and not by the Board for Organization of the Rear of the General Staff of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. That is why Stalin placed Rakutin, a pure-blooded Chekist at the head of the 24th Army instead of the half-Chekist Kalinin. He was the one who knew best how to deal with 'lumberjacks'.

Stalin is widely known to have cleared out the GULAG during the war, by sending everyone who was capable of carrying arms to the front. Sometimes, due to lack of time or shortage of uniforms, the labour-camp prisoners were sent to fight at the front wearing their own clothes. In theory, there was no great difference: the same imitation leather boots, the same ear-flapped fake sealskin hat for winter, and a jacket, which only differed from the soldier's in its colour.

A belief persists, although nobody knows where it came from, that when Hitler attacked, Stalin sent the labour-camp prisoners to the front to 'expiate their guilt'.

Meanwhile, the German troops first encountered the black divisions and corps at the beginning of July 1941. These had begun their movements to the western frontiers of the country on 13 June 1941. The formation of the armies of the Second Strategic Echelon, which embraced all these black divisions and corps, began in June 1940, when Hitler turned away from the Soviet Union by removing almost all his divisions from the Soviet frontier.

Each army belonging to the Second Strategic Echelon was formed with the special idea that they would then make a sudden appearance on the western frontier. Each army was formed on the route of the greatest arterial railway line. Each one was set up in the area of concentration camps. The inmates of these camps were trained to observe order, they led an undemanding existence, and it was easier to pick them up from the camps than from the villages. So they were all rounded up and organized into brigades. But the main thing was that had the men in the villages been taken, it would not have been possible to avoid rumours about mobilization and war. It was precisely to avoid such rumours that the TASS statement was written.

Many years later, books are still being written and songs composed about that period. Here is a fragment by Vladimir Vysotsky:

The gates, new prisoners arriving,
The glass-framed epitaph is blunt,
When to our memory proclaiming
They all went off to fight the front.

Mikhail Demin, the former criminal, wrote that 'almost the whole of Rokossovsky's army consisted of inmates of the labour camps'. (*Blatnoi 'Rusika'*, New York 1981, p. 26)

Rokossovsky commanded only one army, the 16th, in his lifetime. He forgot to say in his memoirs of what it consisted. This forgetfulness is typical of him. He begins his memoirs with the words, 'In the spring of 1940, I was in Sochi [a famous Black Sea resort] with my family,' forgetting to say that before that he had been in the GULAG. Later in the book, Rokossovsky says in passing that 'life has convinced me that one can even trust a man who at some time has allowed himself to break the law. Give such a man the chance to atone for his guilt and you will see that the good in him will come to the surface, and love for the Motherland, for his

people, and his longing to return their trust at whatever the cost, will make a courageous fighter of him.' (Marshal of the Soviet Union K. K. Rokossovsky: *Soldatsky Dolg*, Moscow Voenizdat 1968, p. 136)

This is a tacit admission that Rokossovsky had had sufficient opportunity to become convinced that a soldier could be made out of a labour-camp prisoner. But that is not the main point. What is important is that Stalin gave the labour-camp prisoners 'the opportunity to atone for their guilt' and 'become courageous fighters' *before Hitler attacked*. Armies specially adapted to recruit labour-camp prisoners into their ranks as cannon fodder were being raised even before the planned Operation Barbarossa was heard of. The 16th Army, which was the precursor of the Second Strategic Echelon, was formed on the Trans-Siberian Railway for the purpose of rapid transportation westward; and in Trans-Baikal because there was an adequate number of labour-camp inmates available. A penal army had existed there even before Rokossovsky arrived in August 1941. Before he arrived it was run by another general who had also been a victim of the Great Terror. This was Mikhail Fedorovich Lukin, who was to distinguish himself in heavy fighting at Smolensk. Gravely wounded, he was taken prisoner, and had a leg amputated. When he refused to co-operate with the Germans, he suffered four appalling years in German concentration camps. After being liberated from the German camps, he was sent once again to the GULAG.

The German High Command's encounter with Lukin's 16th Army at the end of June 1941 came as a complete surprise, as did the existence of the entire Second Strategic Echelon. It is for that reason that so many documents about this encounter have been preserved in German records. Anyone who so wishes can find many hundreds of photographs in these archives of Soviet soldiers from the Second Strategic Echelon being captured. There, among all the young lads, one may glimpse now and again the face of a man who has clearly been hardened by life, a man wearing semi-military uniform. Sometimes he is wearing a green military jacket without any badges of rank. But even the green military jacket does not make him look like a soldier. Each one of these men has strong calloused hands, a shaven head and emaciation in his face. These men had not yet passed through the *German* concentration camps. Senior officers such as Rokossovsky came into the army from the GULAG having taken the precaution to fatten themselves up in Sochi; but Sochi passed these poor fellows by.

Given that the German Army came across divisions and corps made up of labour-camp prisoners at the beginning of July, and if these divisions and corps formed part of armies which came from distant provinces

in the Urals, Siberia and Trans-Baikal, it means that Stalin put arms into the hands of labour-camp prisoners before 22 June 1941.

I do not now what German military intelligence knew in the first half of June, but let us assume that it knew very little — no more than the fragments which are known to us today:

1. Some armies were secretly moving towards the western frontiers of the Soviet Union.
2. These armies consisted of a fixed number of soldiers, sometimes entire division, each with a complement of some 15,000 men, and even entire corps, each with more than 50,000 men clad in unusual black uniforms similar to those worn in prison.
3. At least one of these armies was completely fed and maintained by the GULAG of the NKVD.
4. The Soviet government publicly and categorically denied in the TASS statement that there was anything unusual in these troop movements or in their mass character, speaking simply of 'normal training exercises'.

How was the head of German military intelligence to interpret the facts before him? There was, of course, only one interpretation: they must attack Stalin, otherwise they would be his victims.

CHAPTER 25

The *Kombrigs* and the *Komdivs*

*Only he who has first conquered his own
people can overcome a strong enemy.*

SHAN VAN, 5th century B.C.

We began the story about the black divisions and corps with the 63rd Rifle Corps of the 21st Army. Mention was made there of Komkor Petrovsky and Kombrig Fokanov. Why were they not generals? The answer is simple. In the black corps and divisions it was not just the soldiers and officers, but also the senior commanders, who were veterans of the 'small towns of hutments for lumberjacks'.

The military ranks of *kombrig*, *komdiv*, *komkor* and *koman-darm* were in use in the Red Army for senior command staff officers before 1940. Diamond-shaped badges on uniform collar tabs were used to distinguish the different ranks — one badge for a *kombrig*, two for a *komvid*, three for a *komkor*, and four for a *komandarm*. In May 1940, when Stalin was putting his senior command staff in order, he gave new titles of rank in the generals' series, ordered that generals' uniform trousers should have side stripes and, as insignia, that they should wear stars instead of diamond-shaped badges. The new ranks of major-general, lieutenant-general, colonel-general and general of the army were in no way connected with old military ranks. A Government Commission carried out a complete re-grading of the entire senior command staff, in the course of which many *kombrigs* became colonels, so that they were in effect demoted

to the level they were at several years before. Some *kombrigs* became major-generals, and Kombrig I. N. Muzychenko became a lieutenant-general. Many *komandarms* became colonel-generals, although some were demoted to lieutenant-general. But Komkor G. K. Zhukov was given the highest general's rank, that of general of the army. One little known fact, incidentally, is that Zhukov was the first officer of the Red Army to be given the rank of general. In all, 1056 senior commanders were given the military ranks of general and admiral in June 1940.

The introduction of these generals' titles was Stalin's offering of honey-cake after the great thrashings of 1937 and 1938. Why was Comrade Stalin being so kind? Because he was planning to set them to practise their trade in the foreseeable future. Had it been otherwise, he would have been in no hurry with the honey-cake.

But one thousand generals was not enough for Stalin. Divisions were being raised in increasing numbers, corps and armies were being formed. Colonels were being put into generals' posts. At one point there were no fewer than one hundred colonels holding generals' posts, commanding divisions; we have already encountered Colonel I. I. Fedyuninsky in the post of commander of the 15th Rifle Corps of the 5th Army.

There were not enough commanders either. As long as Hitler stood facing him, Stalin could get by with available personnel. But as Hitler turned his face westwards, then Stalin found himself in great need of commanders of senior rank. That explains why the prison wagons were speeding towards Moscow. After arrival, former commanders who had passed through the GULAG were met with politeness in Lubyanka jail, where it was explained that there had been a mistake. Criminal proceedings would be stopped, and previous convictions expunged. The commanders then hastened to Sochi, and from there to the colours.

Not every commander was treated with the same respect. Some were given a general's rank, including Major-General Rokossovsky, the future Marshal of the Soviet Union. But most of those who were released from prison were left with their old military rank of *kombrig*, *komdiv* or *komkor*. This brought about a strange situation in the Red Army. There were two parallel systems of military ranks for the senior command staff, two systems of badges of rank, and two different forms of dress. Some commanders went about proudly wearing their stars, striped pants and smart dress uniforms while others, doing exactly the same work, wore only their modest little diamond-shaped badges.

One method used by the Chekists in Kiev during the Red Terror has been described by the Russian historian, S. P. Mel'gunov, and confirmed by documents. A prisoner who refused to answer questions would without further ado be placed in a coffin and buried. He would then be dug up, and the interrogation would continue.

Stalin did much the same thing in the 'pre-war period'. Thousands of commanders fell into the hands of the GULAG during the years of the Great Purge. Some of them had been condemned to death, others given

lengthy prison sentences which they were serving at Kolyma. According to many witnesses (for example, *Kolyma Stories*, 1978, by V. Shalamov) life there was by no means preferable to being shot. And now here were people who had already said goodbye to life, being transported in comfortable railway carriages, being fed and fattened in health centres reserved for members of the government, being given back their former authority and allowed an opportunity to 'expiate their guilt'. However, the rank of general was not conferred permanently, and carried no guarantees . . . Can we imagine how all these *kombrigs* and *komdivs* were bursting to get down to work?

Stalin's calculation was correct. Many of those who were released were bursting to go into action and prove that they were worthy of trust. These included Komdiv Grigory Alexeyevich Vorozheikin, who was put in charge of the air arm of the 21st Army of the Second Strategic Echelon. He distinguished himself in the initial battles in July 1941 and was granted the rank of air major-general. By August he had become Chief of Staff of the Air Forces of the Red Army. He attained a new rank every year until he became a marshal in 1944.

Kombrig Alexander Gorbатов, released in March 1941, was given the post of deputy commander of the 25th Rifle Corps of the 19th Army, which formed part of the Second Strategic Echelon. He rose to the rank of general and to the post of officer commanding the airborne assault troops of the Soviet Army.

This is how he describes his release:

My wife had been to the NK VD, and was on wings when she left there. She said that they had received her very well, spoke politely, were interested in how she was managing to live, did she need help with money . . .

On the night of 5 March 1941 at two o'clock in the morning, an investigator drove me in a small car to friends of mine in Komsomorskaya Square. He dropped me and politely took his leave.

'Here is my telephone number. If you need anything, ring me at any time. You can count on me to help you.'

Like a relic, I was carrying along a bag containing clothes, galoshes and sugar lumps which were black as coal, and dried biscuits which I had kept should I fall ill. (*Gody i Voiny*, Moscow Voenizdat 1965, pp. 168-169)

Kombrig Gorbатов, like many others, was released on a carefully calculated timetable: a month's leave in a health centre before acceptance for duty. By the time the TASS report was published, the gallant *kombrig* was secretly on his way westwards with his 'Annushkas'.

As a true labour-camp prisoner, Gorbатов collected 'souvenirs' of the GULAG. Luckily for him, he did not need them again. Others were not so fortunate. Kombrig I. F. Dashichev put his snow boots on for the second time. He was released in March 1941, only to be imprisoned again in October. He remained in the GULAG until at least 1953.

Kombrigs, *komdivs* and *komkors* were also used to reinforce the First Strategic Echelon. Kombrig M. S. Tkachev, for example, was posted to the 109th Rifle Division of the 9th Special Rifle Corps; Kombrig I. P. Ivanov was appointed Chief of Staff of the 6th Army; Komdiv A. D. Sokolov, Commander of the 16th Mechanized Corps of the 12th Army; Komdiv G. A. Burichenkov, officer commanding the southern zone of the anti-aircraft defences; Komdiv P. G. Alekseev, officer commanding air forces, 13th Army; Kombrig S. S. Krushin was made Chief of Staff for the Air Force in the North West Front; Kombrig A. S. Titov, head of artillery in the 18th Army, and many more.

In addition, *kombrigs* and *komdivs* were used to fill the gaps left in the hierarchies of the military districts when the Second Strategic Echelon moved off to the western border. Kombrig N. I. Khristofanov became military commissar for the Stavropol' Region; and Kombrig M. V. Khripunov, a chief of branch in the Moscow Military District. The headquarters, as we saw, had been occupied by Chekists with little understanding of military matters after all the commanders had left for the Romanian frontier. So poor old Khripunov was summoned from the GULAG to help them.

But even so, most of the *komdivs*, *kombrigs* and *komkors* were earmarked for the Second Strategic Echelon. It is here we find Komkor Petrovsky. We remember that his last post had been deputy officer commanding the Moscow Military District. After this he was imprisoned. He was released in November 1940 and ordered to form the 63rd Rifle Corps. This is where the black corps began. Of the three divisions in the corps, two were commanded by Kombrigs Ya. S. Fokanov and V. S. Rakovsky. Colonel N. A. Prishchepa commanded the third

division. He was not a *kombrig*, although he had also been a prisoner. There were majors, captains and lieutenants too.

The neighbouring 67th Corps of the same army was full of *kombrigs*. There was even a *kombrig* at the head of the corps, F. F. Zhmachenko, who later became a colonel-general. Look at any of these armies being secretly moved from the depth of the country, and everywhere you will see hordes of *kombrigs* who had just been released. There were two corps in the 22nd Army with a *kombrig* in each - Povetkin of the 51st Corps and I. P. Karmanov, of the 62nd. The chiefs of staff, of artillery, of engineers, and of any other service, were all officers just released from prison. Two divisions in this army consisted predominantly of 'lumberjacks', with commanders from the same milieu - Kombrig Ya. S. Adamson of the H2nd Rifle and Kombrig A. I. Zygin of the I74th.

The process of releasing *kombrigs*, *komdivs* and *komkors* was begun before Operation Barbarossa was known about, and peaked at the moment when German troops left for France. Having forced a corridor through the neutral states which stood between him and Germany, Stalin now offered a 'second birth' to an enormous number of commanders who had been condemned to a rapid or slow death in the camps. These people had once held arms and great power, but every one of them had become a prisoner under sentence of death and was now burning with a desire to get back to the heights from which Stalin had toppled them. While Stalin officially reassured Germany that nothing important was happening, these officers - at the head of vast armies of fellow ex-convicts - were secretly heading for the frontier.

CHAPTER 26

Why the Second Strategic Echelon was Formed

Mobilization is war, and we do not contemplate any other interpretation.

Marshal B. M. SHAPOSHNIKOV

(Vospominaniya M., Voenizdat 1974, p. 558)

Shortly after the first German troops began to invade the Soviet Union, General I. V. Tyulenev was having a conversation in the Kremlin with Zhukov. 'I reported it to Stalin', Zhukov said, 'but at first he didn't believe it, and thought it was a provocation by some German generals.' (*Cherez Tri Voyny*, Moscow Voenizdat 1960, p. 141) This creates a serious contradiction for communist historians who argue that Stalin carried out the largest regrouping of troops in history because he sensed that a German attack was imminent. Even *after* the attack had actually begun, Stalin refused to believe that it was happening.

Moving the Second Strategic Echelon was not a reaction to what Hitler was doing. This vast railway operation needed long and detailed preparation and accurate preparatory planning. Marshal of the Soviet Union S. K. Kurkotkin states that the General Staff passed all the necessary documents on the troop transfers to the People's Commissariat for railways on 21 February 1941. (*Tyl Sovetskoykh Vooruzhenykh Sil v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine*, Moscow Voenizdat 1977, p. 33) But the General Staff was asked for more time to prepare these documents with due thoroughness. They would have to tell the railwaymen what transport to provide, how to camouflage the loads and the movements, what routes to take, and where to prepare for massive troop disembarkations. In order to have all this ready, the General Staff would have had to have known the details of troop movements in advance. It means we must go further back to find the decision to set up the Second Strategic Echelon, and where the planning began for its transfer and for its combat use.

In fact, the process was set in motion by a Politburo decision, and began on 19 August 1939 - before Hitler had invaded Poland or gone to war with Britain and France. At no time did it falter, but gradually gathered

momentum. Let us take just one Military District, the Urals, as an example. Two new divisions were formed there in September 1939, the 85th and the 159th. On 21 June 1941, we find the 85th right on the German frontier near Augustow, in a sector where the NK VD was cutting down the barbed wire. We also find the 159th Division right on the frontier in Rava-Russkaya, where it was part of the 6th (heavy shock) Army. The 110th, 125th, and 128th Rifle Divisions were formed in the same Urals Military District at the end of 1939, and later we find each one of them on the German border. Not only that, Soviet sources tell us that the 125th was 'directly on the frontier' of East Prussia. The Urals District raised many more regiments and divisions, and they were all moved quietly and without fuss nearer to the borders.

While the Second Strategic Echelon still did not officially exist, the senior Soviet military leadership was working out methods by which the troops of the First and Second Strategic Echelons could co-operate. In the second half of 1940, General D. G. Pavlov held a meeting with the officers commanding the armies and the chiefs of staff in the Western Special Military District. Among all the thousands of Soviet generals and admirals, D. G. Pavlov was fourth highest in seniority.

The Western Special Military District was making grandiose plans to hold command-staff exercises. Plans of action were worked out for commanders, headquarters, and communications systems to be used in the initial period of war. In the course of the exercises, the Soviet headquarters had to move to the west in exactly the same way as they would prepare to do as war began. 'But these headquarters which are right on the frontier?' Colonel-General Sandalov, Chief of Staff of the 4th Army, asked perplexedly. 'Where will they move to?' (L. M. Sandalov, *Perezhito*, Moscow Voenizdat 1966, p. 65) Nobody keeps headquarters 'right on the frontier' when preparing for a defensive war, but Soviet headquarters had been moved there, and stayed there, immediately after the common border with Germany had been established. The reaction of this chief of staff of an army on the frontier is also interesting. In his mind the order to move was only associated with the concepts of 'move to the west', and 'move across the frontier'; it did not occur to him that in a war the headquarters could be moved elsewhere.

In addition to the commanders of the First Strategic Echelon, the meeting was also attended by highly-placed guests from the Second Strategic Echelon, led by General I. V. Tyulenev, officer commanding the Moscow Military District. Taking advantage of Tyulenev's presence, General D. G. Pavlov explained to

Lieutenant-General V. I. Chuikov, the officer commanding 4th Army and a future Marshal of the Soviet Union, the objectives of the Second Strategic Echelon:

'When the troops get here from the internal military districts,' said Pavlov, 'and when a density has been achieved in your army's zone of seven and a half kilometres per division, then there can be movement forward without any doubts about success.' (*Ibid*)

The presence of General Tyulenev at this meeting is very significant. He already knew in 1940 what his role would be in the initial period of war. This was to report with his headquarters to the frontier military district, when the First Strategic Echelon would cross the state frontier. This Soviet plan was changed in February 1941 under pressure from Zhukov, who had by then taken over the General Staff. In the changed version, instead of going to the German frontier, General Tyulenev and his headquarters had to move secretly to the Romanian frontier, for that was where the main efforts of the Red Army were to be concentrated.

The troop density of seven and a half kilometres per division which the Soviet generals were using is the standard one for an offensive. At that time a division would have been allocated a stretch of terrain some three to four times greater for defensive operations. This same meeting also discussed how the movement of Soviet troops to the frontier could be camouflaged. 'Movements . . . of new divisions,' the meeting decided, 'can be carried out under the guise of training refresher courses.'

By 13 June 1941, 77 divisions from the internal military districts were headed for the Soviet western frontiers 'under the guise of training refresher courses'. In that situation, Hitler did not sit back and wait. While the Soviet generals were establishing 'the regulation density of seven and a half kilometres per division', he struck the first blow.

After Germany had begun its preventive war, the Second Strategic Echelon, like the First, was used for defence. But this in no way means that this was the purpose for which it had been created. General Mikhail Ilyich Kazakov said of the Second Echelon that 'after the war began, cardinal changes had to be made in the plan governing its use'. (VIZH1972, No. 12, p. 46)

Major-General Vassily Ivanovich Zemskov expressed himself more exactly: 'We were compelled to use these reserves for defence, and not in accordance with the plan for an offensive.' (VIZH 1971, No. 10, p. 13)

General of the Army Simion Pavlovich Ivanov outlines the original plan behind the formation of the Second Strategic Echelon:

If the troops of the First Strategic Echelon were to succeed ... in carrying military operations on to enemy territory even before the main forces had been deployed, the Second Strategic Echelon would have to augment the efforts of the First Echelon by developing a response attack as laid down by the general strategic plan. (*Nachal'nyi Period Voiny*, Moscow Voenizdat 1974, p. 206)

The reader must not be misled by the term 'response attack' in this sentence. Its meaning, as used here, may be understood by glancing at the Winter War with Finland. Almost 50 years later, the Soviet version is still that Finland attacked, and that the Red Army only delivered a 'response attack'.

Lieutenant-General S. A. Kalinin tells of the mood which prevailed then in the Second Strategic Echelon. Before the secret troop movements began, he was training troops in the Siberian Military District for operational action. During the exercises, the general heard this opinion expressed by a very junior officer: 'Those fortifications there will not be used, that's for sure. We're getting ready not for defence but attack, you see. We'll hit the enemy on his own territory.' (*Razmyshleniya o Minuvshem*, Moscow 1963, p. 124) General Kalinin relayed the young officer's words with a certain irony: how naive can one be, he implied. But he did not say from where the young officer had got such ideas. If the young officer was wrong, General Kalinin should have corrected him, and then pointed out to all the commanders that there was something which the junior officers were failing to understand, and that was that the orientation of the training was not quite right. He then should have immediately questioned the commanders in the adjacent battalions, regiments and divisions, and if he then found that this 'incorrect' opinion was being repeated, he should have issued a stern command throughout the 24th Army ordering that the orientation of the training be corrected. But General Kalinin did not do this, and the troops continued to be trained 'to fight on enemy territory'.

It was not the fault of the young commanders that they were not being trained for defence. It was not even the fault of General Kalinin. He was only the officer commanding one army, when all armies were being trained to fight 'on enemy territory'. He reveals his own attitude to the issue in an interesting anecdote. After

he had handed over the command of the 24th Army to General K. Rakutin, Kalinin returned to Siberia, where he trained ten new divisions 'in the small towns of hutments for lumberjacks'. 'From where do I begin?' he asked himself.

On what has the main attention of the troops to be concentrated when they do their training, on defence or attack? The position at the fronts was still tense. Red Army troops were continuing to fight heavy defensive battles.

Experience gained in the fighting showed that we were far from adept on occasions when constructing our defence. Defensive positions were frequently ill-equipped in the engineering sense. Sometimes there was not even a trench system at the first position. The battle formation of the defenders often consisted of only one echelon and a small reserve, which diminished the troops' resistance. In many cases the men were badly trained in anti-tank defence, and the notorious tankophobia, or fear of tanks, was present among the troops.

But at the same time the thought occurred - 'We shall not always be defending ourselves. Attack - that's the compulsory thing . . .

'What is more, defence is not considered, nor has it ever been, to be the main form of military action . . . this means that the troops must be trained for offensive fighting . . .' I shared this view with the commanders. We all came to the same conclusion. The principal efforts in training must be directed at carefully working through offensive action. (*Ibid*, pp. 182-183)

The first duty of the state and its army at the time was to stop the enemy, if only at the walls of Moscow. Yet it was obvious to everyone that the Red Army was not ready for defence - it was not even preparing for it.

Even after the German attack, when the Wehrmacht was threatening the very existence of the communist regime, General Kalinin was going on training his troops only to attack. What had he been training them to do before the German invasion began?

As a result of German preventive action, the Second Strategic Echelon had to be used for defence, and not for its intended purpose. I have sufficient documentation to establish the role which had been assigned to it by the Soviet war plans. Here, as in the First Echelon, each army had its own unique individuality, and its own personality and character. Most armies travelled light, like a strong frame which had to be filled in after it had arrived in the forests in the western parts of the country and been deployed there. The standard complement of the armies in the Second Strategic Echelon was two rifle corps, each with three rifle divisions. This was not a shock army, but an ordinary one with a reduced complement.

On arrival in the western areas of the country, each army immediately set about completing its mobilization and supplementing its divisions and corps. It was quite logical that most of the armies in the Second Strategic Echelon did not have mechanized corps with large numbers of tanks. First, such corps were set up mainly in the western parts of the country. If the need arose, they did not have to be moved westwards from provinces deep in the Urals and Siberia. It would be more simple to reinforce them where they already were by light armies arriving from these distant provinces. There was an even better alternative. This was to use by far the greater part of the mechanized corps in the first surprise strike, in order to make it an extraordinarily powerful one; then to throw the Second Strategic Echelon into battle, and transfer to its light armies all the tanks which had survived the first operations.

There was, however, an exception among the armies of the Second Echelon. The 16th was manifestly a shock army. Its complement included a full-strength mechanized corps which had over 1,000 tanks. In addition, the detached 57th Tank Division, under the command of Colonel V. A. Mishulin, was moved westwards along with this army. The 57th Tank Division was under the operational command of the officer commanding the 16th Army. Taking this division into account, the 16th Army had more than 1,200 tanks, and on full complement this figure must have exceeded 1,340.

The 19th Army was even more powerful. This had been moved secretly from the Northern Caucasus. Its complement included four corps, including the 26th Mechanized Corps. There is sufficient evidence to show that the 25th Mechanized Corps, under the command of Major-General Simion Krivoshein, had also been earmarked for the 19th Army. This clearly was a heavy shock army. Even its rifle corps were organized in an unusual way and were headed by very high-ranking commanders. The 34th Rifle Corps, under Lieutenant-

General R. P. Khmel'nitsky, for example, had four rifle and one mountain rifle divisions on its complement, as well as several heavy artillery regiments.

The presence of the mountain rifle divisions in these armies was not accidental. The 19th Army, the most powerful in the Second Strategic Echelon, was secretly deployed, but not against Germany. The whole Soviet grand design is revealed here- the most powerful army in the First Strategic Echelon was deployed against Romania; and the most powerful army in the Second Strategic Echelon, right at its back, against Romania as well.

The 16th Army, the second most powerful in the Second Strategic Echelon, was deployed alongside. It could also have been used against Romania and its vital oilfields, but it was more probable that the plan was to use it against Hungary alongside the 26th (shock) and the 12th (mountain shock) Armies, cutting off the oil from its users.

Hitler disrupted this deployment with his invasion. The 16th and 19th Armies had to move immediately to Smolensk, thereby putting back the 'liberation' of Romania and Hungary by several years.

Immediately after the partition of Poland in the autumn of 1939, a great number of Soviet troops were transferred from permanent garrisons on to the new frontier. The new territories, however, had not been adapted to the stationing of large numbers of troops, especially modern troops equipped with a great deal of weapons and technical equipment.

The official *History of the Second World War* records how 'the troops in the western frontier districts experienced great difficulties. Everything had to be built and equipped anew, bases and supply points, airfields, the road network, junctions and lines of communication . . .' (1973-77, Vol. 4, p. 27)

The official *History of the Byelorussian Military District* paints a similar picture:

The displacement of formations and units of the District to the western areas of Byelorussia gave rise to not inconsiderable difficulties . . . The personnel of the 3rd, 4th and 10th Armies had to build and repair barracks, depots and camps, and equip training grounds, firing ranges and tank training areas. The troops were under great strain. (KBVO, Moscow Voenizdat 1983, p. 84)

General Sandalov says that in 1939-40, depots, wooden huts and any buildings at all were used for billeting troops. But the troops kept on coming. 'There was a great pile-up of troops in Brest-Litovsk . . . four-tiered bunks were fitted up in the lower floors of barrack buildings.' (*Na Moskovskom Napravlenii*, Moscow Nauka 1970, p. 41)

Lieutenant-General V. N. Kurdyumov, head of the Combat Training Directorate of the Red Army said at a command staff meeting in December 1940 that the troops in the new regions were often compelled to do domestic work instead of doing combat training. At the same meeting, Lieutenant-General Ya. N. Fedorenko said that almost all his tank units had moved their deployment garrisons three or four times towards the border during 1939-40. The result was that more than half of the units who had gone to new locations had not had any ranges to train on.

In 1939 and 1940, at the cost of strenuous effort, the enormous number of troops belonging to the First Strategic Echelon accommodated and quartered. But then, in February 1941, slowly at first and then at an ever increasing speed, the transfer began of the huge numbers of troops in the Second Strategic Echelon.

At that point, a change of considerable importance took place. *Soviet troops ceased to concern themselves about how they would spend the following winter.* All the troops of the First Strategic Echelon left their dug-outs and partially built barracks and moved directly onto the frontier. (Marshal I. Kh. Bagramyan, *VIZH* 1976, No. I, p. 62) The troops in the Second Strategic Echelon who were being moved from the interior of the country did not use the uncompleted barracks and small military centres which the First Echelon had left behind. The arriving troops did not mean to spend the winter in these places, and were in no way preparing themselves for winter. They no longer made dug-outs, they did not build training grounds or firing ranges; they did not even dig trenches.

There are many official documents and memoirs by generals and marshals to show that the troops were now quartered only under canvas. In the early spring of 1941, the 188th Rifle Division of the 11th Army's 16th Rifle Corps was being formed in the Baltic area. It took in reservists in May. The division struck a temporary summer encampment under canvas near Kozlovo-Rua, some 45-50 kilometres from the state frontier. Under cover of the TASS report, the division abandoned this encampment and moved to the frontier. Any attempt to find even a hint of preparations for winter would be bound to fail. It was the same story with the 28th Tank Division, which was being deployed nearby.

Marshal of the Soviet Union K. S. Moskalenko, who was then a brigade commander with the rank of major-general, recalls the orders given to him by Major-General M. I. Potapov, officer commanding the 5th Army:

'The formation of your brigade has begun here . . . You will take that section of forest, and build a camp . . . ' This powerful, full-strength brigade, with a complement of more than 6,000 men armed with more than one hundred heavy guns of a calibre of up to 107mm, had the camp working in three days. After this, the intensive combat training began. It went on for eight to ten hours daily, and this did not include night work, homework, arms maintenance, and weapons training. (*Na Yugo — Zapadnom Napravleny*, Moscow Nauka 1969, p. 18)

If the Soviet troops had been preparing for defence, they would have had to dig in and make a continuous line of trenches stretching from the Arctic to the mouth of the Danube. But they did not do this. If they had intended to spend another winter in peace and quiet, then, from the beginning of April, they should have been building. They did not do this either. Some divisions had left half-built barracks somewhere behind. But many divisions formed in the spring of 1941 had neither barracks nor hutments, yet they were not even making dug-outs. So where did they intend to spend the winter, if not in central and southern Europe?

Major-General A. Zaporozhchenko has left us a remarkable description of the movements of troops towards the frontier:

The concealed movement of the shock groupings up to the areas from where the offensive would begin was the concluding phase of the strategic deployment. This movement was carried out over several nights prior to the attack. The covering action for the movement was organized by forces of reinforced battalions which had been previously moved up to the frontier, and which were controlling those sectors of the front which had been allotted to the divisions, until the main forces arrived.

The redeployment of air force units to other bases began in the last days of May and was concluded by 18 June. At the same time fighter and military aircraft were concentrated at airfields up to 40 kilometres from the frontier, while bombers were put on airfields no more than 180 kilometres from the border. (*VIZH* 1984, No. 4, p. 42)

The only surprising thing about this description is the date -18 June. The Soviet air forces did not complete their redeployment to other bases on that day - they had only began it on 13 June under cover of the TASS report. So why does the general talk about 18 June? The fact is that he was speaking not about the Red Army, but about the German Wehrmacht. The same thing was happening in Germany: troops were being moved up to the frontier at night. Reinforced battalions were being sent ahead. The arriving divisions were occupying the departure areas for the offensive, or to put it more simply, they were hiding in the forests. The actions of one colossal army were the mirror image of the actions of the other. The only respect in which they failed to coincide was time. At first the Soviet troops were ahead. Then Hitler went into the lead by two weeks. He had fewer troops and had to move them over very short distances. Interestingly, at the beginning of June the German Army was in a most disadvantageous position. A great number of the troops were in military trains. The guns were in one train, the shells in another. Combat battalions were disembarked in places where there were no headquarters; and headquarters were set down in places where there were no troops. There were no communications, so that for security reasons radio stations were simply forbidden to operate until military action began. The German troops did not make dug-outs either, nor did they build ranges. The greatest similarity, however, was the massive quantity of supplies, troops, aircraft hospitals, headquarters and aerodromes, all up against the Soviet frontiers. Few people knew what was planned; that was the most closely guarded secret of the German High Command.

Everything that we have seen in the Red Army, and have taken for foolishness and idiocy, had in fact been done two weeks before in the German Army. It was neither foolishness nor idiocy, but preparation for a massive offensive.

What should have happened following the full build-up of troops belonging to the Second Strategic Echelon in the western parts of the country? The answer to this question was given long before World War II began, by the Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Army, General V. Sikorsky: 'A strategic wait cannot be continued after all forces have been mobilized and their build-up completed.' (*Budushchaya Voina*, Moscow Voenizdat 1936, p. 240). The Soviet General Staff decided that his book should be published in Moscow for the benefit of Soviet commanders. It corroborated Soviet military thought, which was firmly convinced that 'the worst thing in modern conditions is the urge to stick to waiting tactics in the initial period of war'. (*Voina i Revolyutsiya* 1931, Book 8, p. n)

Marshal of the Soviet Union Boris Mikhailovich Shaposhni-kov, Chief of the Soviet General Staff, held firm views about this.

If reservists who have been called up have to spend a long time under the colours without any prospect of war in view, the result can be a negative effect on their morale. Their combat readiness deteriorates instead of improving . . . In a word, no matter what the command, and even more what the diplomats might wish, once mobilization has been declared, the guns might start firing on their own for purely military reasons.

Thus the proposition must be considered doubtful that it is possible in modern conditions of warfare for mobilized armies to remain for a long period in a state of military peace without going over to active fighting. (*Mozg Army*, Vol. 3, GIZ, 1929)

Soviet military thinking considered then, as it does now, that 'mobilization, concentration, operational deployment and mounting the first operations are all parts of one and the same single uninterrupted process'.

(VIZH 1986, No. I, p. 15) Having begun to mobilize and thereby to concentrate troops and deploy them operationally, the Soviet command could no longer stop this process, or even slow it down. It is roughly the same thing as thrusting one's arm sharply downwards, unfastening the holster, pulling out the revolver, pointing it at the enemy and cocking the trigger all in one movement. After that, whether you like it or not, firing is inevitable, for as soon as your hand is thrust downwards, your opponent is doing the same thing just as quickly, or even more so.

In trying to answer the question of who started the Soviet -German war in 1941, communist historians apply the criterion that the guilty party was the one who fired the first shot. But why should we not apply another criterion? Why should we not turn our attention to the one who was first to begin mobilization, to concentrate his troops and to deploy them operationally? Who first reached for his pistol?

Soviet apologists argue that while Shaposhnikov - and modern Soviet strategists, for that matter - understood that the movement of troops was war, Zhukov did not. This was very far from the case. In order to understand the determination being shown by the Soviet High Command in what it was doing, we must go back to 1932, to the 4th Cavalry Division. This was not just the best division of Soviet cavalry; it was the best in the whole of the Red Army. Until 1931, this division was quartered in the Leningrad Military District in places where the Imperial Horseguards had once been. The conditions in which this division lived and trained for battle can easily be imagined. Their living conditions were nothing less than magnificent. In 1932, for urgent operational reasons, this division was moved to another, this time totally unprepared, base. Marshal Zhukov wrote that

this division was compelled to spend eighteen months building itself barracks, stables, a headquarters, living quarters, depots and an entire training base. The result was that this brilliantly trained division was turned into a bad, unskilled military unit. A shortage of building materials, wet weather and other unfavourable conditions prevented the building being completed by the time winter came. This had an extremely bad effect on the general condition of the division and its combat preparedness. Discipline became slack . . . (*Vospominaniya iRazmyshleniya*, Moscow, APN 1969, p. 118)

In spring, the best division in the Red Army was 'in a state of rapid collapse' and 'was unfit for battle'. The divisional commander was held to be chiefly to blame for this and suffered the consequences. A new commander was then sought for the division, and G. K. Zhukov was appointed to the post. It was from here

that his ascent began. Zhukov's work was closely followed by S. K. Timoshenko, the corps commander, and even by the People's Commissar for Defence himself, K. E. Voroshilov. The division bore his name and was considered to be the best. Voroshilov expected Zhukov to restore past glories to the 4th Cavalry Division. Zhukov achieved this by draconian measures, proving that he could be entrusted with any theoretically impracticable task.

By 1941, all the characters in this story had risen considerably in rank. K. E. Voroshilov was a member of the Politburo, a Marshal of the Soviet Union and chairman of the Defence Committee; S. K. Timoshenko was a Marshal of the Soviet Union and People's Commissar for Defence; and Zhukov was a full general, deputy People's Commissar for Defence and Chief of the General Staff. These three together directed the secret Soviet troop movements towards the German frontier. They knew better than we did, and not from theoretical deduction, that not even one division could be left to spend the winter in the open forest. A soldier can spend the winter in any conditions, but that was not the problem. The problem was that on the Soviet western frontiers there were no firing ranges, training grounds, tank training areas, training centres, or conditions needed for combat training. If the troops were not put into battle immediately, there would be an inevitable deterioration in their combat readiness. They knew that not even one division could be left for the winter in a place which had not been prepared in any way. They knew that culprits would be found, and they also knew what happened to culprits. But even so, they moved practically the entire Red Army to places where there was nowhere to do combat training.

The war did not begin as Stalin wanted and therefore it did not end as he had wanted either. Stalin got only half of Europe. But in order to understand what Stalin intended, let us for a moment envisage a situation in which Hitler did not attack the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, but decided to postpone Operation Barbarossa and capture Gibraltar, for example, instead.

What would Stalin have done in that situation? He could not have turned back his massive armies. Many of the armies and corps which were set up in the first half of 1941 had nowhere to go back to, apart from the 'small towns of hutments for lumberjacks'. It would have taken many months to move the troops back, paralysed the railways and brought on an economic catastrophe. What would have been the sense of spending six months concentrating troops in secret, and then spending another six months dispersing them?

But even if a total dispersal had immediately followed the total concentration, it would have been quite impossible to complete this process before winter set in.

Nor could Stalin have left his vast armies to winter in the forests of the frontier area. An army quickly loses its fighting capability without intensive combat training. In addition, the process by which the armies of the Second Strategic Echelon were raised and moved westwards was kept, for whatever reason, a close secret by Stalin. For how long could he have been sure of preserving that secret had he left these armies with their countless troops on the border for even a few weeks?

This is the central question of this book: if the Red Army could not go back, but could not stay long in the border area either, what was left for it to do? It is a question which all communist historians are afraid to answer. But we need look no further than the opinion of a general who 'was a deputy chief of the operations headquarters in the General Staff from May 1940 onwards, and who worked on the operational part of the plan for the strategic deployment of the Soviet armed forces in the north, north-west, and western sectors'. (*Soviet Military Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, p. 27) Everything was correct in his planning. That was why he became a Marshal of the Soviet Union only eighteen months after beginning the war as a major-general. He was one of those who was closest to Stalin. It was he, and not Zhukov, who controlled the Red Army in the last years of Stalin's life, and who fell from high rank when Stalin died.

Marshal of the Soviet Union Alexander Mikhailovich Vasi-levsky was perfectly frank in his appraisal of the situation: 'The fears that the allegedly aggressive intentions of the USSR might cause a clamour in the West had to be thrown overboard. We had then reached . . . the Rubicon of war, and had to take a firm step forward.' (*VIZH* 1978, No. 2, p. 68)

In every grandiose scheme, there comes a critical point after which events become irreversible. For the Soviet Union that point was the date of 13 June 1941. After that day, war for Stalin not only became inevitable: it became inevitable in the summer of 1941, no matter how Hitler might act.

CHAPTER 27

Undeclared War

In conditions where we are surrounded by enemies, a sudden attack from us, an unexpected manoeuvre and speed will decide everything.

STALIN (Vol. 5, p. 225, 1923)

The Soviet Union had five military districts on its borders where troops were assembling unremittingly and in secret. All eight internal military districts had been entirely abandoned by the Soviet High Command. All armies, corps and divisions, and almost all generals and their staffs had left these internal military districts in secret for the Soviet western frontiers.

In addition to the five western frontier and the eight internal military districts, there were the Far East Front and three eastern frontier military districts: the Transcaucasian, the Central Asian and the Trans-Baikal districts.

In spite of the TASS denial of 9 May 1941, intensive preparations had been going on in the Central Asian and Transcaucasian military districts for the 'liberation' of Iran. The Central Asian district had been allotted the main role, while the Transcaucasian had been given an auxiliary part to play. As was usual, the final touch to the preparations was a large-scale exercise to be attended by the senior command staff of the Red Army. General Zhukov and his deputy Lieu-tenant-General N. F. Vatutin were to attend these exercises in May.

General Shtemenko, who was then a colonel in the Chief Operations Directorate of the General Staff, recalled the uneasy atmosphere surrounding these preparations:

The main staff of our branch set off for Tiflis at the end of May. We were reinforced by other branches . . . Just before we left, it was explained that neither the Chief of the General Staff nor his deputy could come,

and that the exercises -would be conducted by the officers commanding the troops, D. T. Kozlov in the Transcaucasian Military District and S. G. Trofimenko in the Central Asian Military District. However, the day after we reached Tiflis, Lieutenant-General Kozlov was urgently summoned to Moscow. There was a feeling that there was something out of the ordinary going on in Moscow. (General S. M. Shtemenko, *General'ny Shtab v Gody Voyny*, 1968, p. 20)

So the Transcaucasian Military District, which was a frontier one, was left without a commanding officer right on the eve of the 'liberation' of Iran. It may be argued that General Kozlov's deputy, Lieutenant-General P. M. Batov, could have taken over the command of the district. Batov, however, was otherwise engaged. Using the best troops in the Transcaucasian Military District, Batov set up the 9th Special Rifle Corps. He then transferred it to the Crimea where, in co-operation with the Black Sea Fleet, it was given intensive training in naval assault landing operations. The Black Sea Fleet also trained a division from this corps in making assault landings from warships.

The Transcaucasian Military District remained without its commanding officer and his deputy until August 1941, when General Kozlov returned to carry out the 'liberation' of Iran. Here too, Hitler had upset Stalin's plans. Because of Hitler's unforeseen actions, the 'liberation' of Iran had to be postponed for a few months. When it did take place, it had to be done with reduced forces, so the 'liberation' had to do without the planned 'radical socio-political reforms'.

General S. G. Trofimenko, the officer commanding the Central Asian Military District, had been summoned to Moscow by Stalin, and the district's headquarters had been seriously weakened and 'dispossessed like kulaks'. In March 1941, Colonel N. M. Khlebnikov was called to Moscow from the headquarters of the Central Asian Military District and appointed Commander of Artillery in the 2yth Army in the Baltic area. The 2yth Army made its first official appearance in the western part of the country in May 1941, but cadres allotted to it had gathered along the frontiers considerably earlier. Major-General M. I. Kazakov, who was chief of staff in the district and later became a full general, was also called to Moscow in the wake of Khlebnikov and many other colonels and generals. He later wrote that he had observed from the aircraft an enormous number of military trains carrying troops and war material out of Central Asia. (*Nad Kartoi Bylykh Srazheny*, Moscow Voeniz-dat 1971)

General A. A. Luchinsky (then a colonel commanding the 83rd Mountain Rifle Division) was travelling in one of these trains. He shared a compartment with Major-General (later General) Ivan Efimovich Petrov. Luchinsky's recollections of Petrov are invaluable. 'We had been summoned to the People's Commissariat for Defence. We were travelling together in the same compartment when a radio announcement proclaimed that Nazi Germany had attacked our country.' Luchinsky does not tell us why he had been summoned to Moscow, but he says of his friend General Petrov that 'He was appointed Commander of the 192nd Rifle Division not long before the war, and then of the 27th Mechanized Corps, at the head of which he too left for the front.' (VIZHI976, No. 9, pp. 121-122)

Petrov converted the 192nd Rifle Division into a mountain rifle division; both it and the 27th Mechanized Corps secretly moved to the Romanian frontier. Petrov, meanwhile, went to Moscow to be given his combat mission. We come across this procedure on more than one occasion: the 16th Army, for example, was secretly moved to the Romanian frontier, while Lieutenant-General M. Lukin, its commanding officer, was in Moscow being given his combat instructions.

Luchinsky's brief article about General Petrov paints an apparently uneventful picture. But let us look at the order in which events occurred. First of all, Petrov set up the 27th Mechanized Corps, loaded it on to military trains, and sent it off to the front. Then, when he was already on the train, he heard the announcement that Germany had started the war. The most interesting thing, however, happened several days later: the 27th Mechanized Corps was disbanded while it was travelling. In a defensive war, such purely offensive formations are simply not needed. In July 1941, all the other mechanized corps were disbanded as well. There were 29 of them in all.

This situation seems quite absurd. The 27th Mechanized Corps was on its way to war *before* Hitler attacked. But as soon as Hitler began the war the 27th Corps was disbanded even before it had encountered the enemy. This is not as absurd as it seems, however. For the 27th Mechanized Corps was being transferred from Central Asia to the Romanian frontier in order to fight, not in the war which Hitler had just begun, but in a war which should have been started by some other means.

The inescapable conclusion is that, had Hitler not attacked, the 27th Mechanized Corps would still have taken part in a war. It was precisely to do so that it was travelling to the front. By launching Operation

Barbarossa when he did, Hitler averted the war for which the 27th Mechanized Corps and 28 of its fellow corps, each with an estimated 1,000 tanks, had been created.

Travelling on trains from Central Asia along with Petrov and Luchinsky were quite a few famous commanders, and others who were destined to become so. Among them was Major-General Alexei Simionovich Zhadov, who had been commanding a mountain cavalry division in Central Asia. On the eve of the war, he was made commander of the 4th Airborne Assault Corps, and reached the front at the height of hostilities. (*VIZH* 1971, No. 3, p. 124)

If anyone tries to prove to you that Stalin gathered his generals on the Soviet western frontiers in order to repel German aggression or to launch 'counter attacks', then remind him of General Zhadov, who changed a mountain cavalry division in Central Asia for an airborne assault corps in Byelorussia. Are airborne assault corps really intended for making counterattacks or repelling aggression?

The Trans-Baikal Military District was abandoned, even though its troops were not just on Soviet territory, but in Mongolia where quite recently there had been a real war involving hundreds of tanks and aircraft, thousands of guns and tens of thousands of soldiers.

Of all the internal military districts and frontier districts in the east, the Trans-Baikal was the only one to have armies on its complement. There were two of them, the 16th and the 17th. The 17th Army was stationed in Mongolia, but in 1940 it had been 'lightened' to such an extent that the post of deputy officer commanding the army was occupied by a colonel, P. P. Polu-boyarov, because of a shortage of generals. As we already know, he too was summoned to Moscow and then posted to the North-West Front.

The other army in the Trans-Baikal Military District, the 16th, had left secretly, travelling westwards. Although rumours about the Iranian frontier were spread among the wives who had remained behind, the 16th Army commanders knew that they were going to wage war, and they also knew against whom.

When the 16th Army left, the headquarters of the Trans-Baikal Military District was also 'lightened' when many of its officers and generals were transferred to the divisions and corps of the 16th Army. Major-General

Petr Chernyshev, for instance, who commanded the 16th Army's 152nd Rifle Division, was promoted and appointed commander of the combat training branch of the Trans-Baikal Military District. But, 'when the army left, Petr Nikolaevich stated that he would "go to fight with his division", and fixed it so that he was sent back to the 152nd'. (Major-General A. A. Lobachev, *Trudnymi Doro-gami*, Moscow Voenizdat 1960, p. 147)

It was not only second-rate colonels and generals who were raked in from Trans-Baikal. Some truly great commanders were gathered from here. Among the greatest were the officers commanding the district. Although only one officer commanded the district at any one time, the post was rotated with surprising frequency. In 1940, the Trans-Baikal District was commanded by Lieutenant-General F. N. Remezov. He was then sent off to take charge of the Orel Military District, where he secretly formed the 20th Army and, under cover of the TASS report, moved it to the German frontier. After Remezov, the Trans-Baikal District was fleetingly commanded by Lieutenant-General I. S. Konev. He was then transferred from there to the Northern Caucasus Military District, where he secretly formed the 19th Army and, again under cover of the TASS report, posted it to the Romanian frontier. At this point Lieutenant-General P. A. Kurochkin (who later became a full general) took over command of the Trans-Baikal District. Before the TASS report, Kurochkin sent the 16th Army off, wishing its commanders and soldiers success in carrying out 'any order given by the Motherland'. The 16th Army had the longest road to travel. That was why it set off early, so that it could appear on the Soviet western borders at the same time as all the other armies of the Second Strategic Echelon.

And what of Lieutenant-General P. A. Kurochkin? It is no easy matter to send a whole army off in military trains in such a way that nobody finds out about it. Kurochkin completed his mission and heaved a sigh of relief. On 13 June, when the TASS report was being given out, Kurochkin was ordered to leave the Trans-Baikal District immediately for Moscow, to be given a new post. The *Red Star* newspaper of 26 May 1984 testifies that on 22 June 1941 Kurochkin was in a compartment of an express train then approaching Irkutsk . . . The Trans-Baikal Military District had been abandoned and left without a commander. The *Soviet Military Encyclopedia* (Vol. 3, p. 357) states that it was September 1941 before another commander appeared in Trans-Baikal.

Generals and officers were being transferred to the German and Romanian frontiers not only from the internal and semi-front military districts, but from a real front. A war was already taking place in the Far East. Armed skirmishes frequently grew into serious clashes, with hundreds of tanks and aircraft taking part on both sides. A full-scale war between Japan and the Soviet Union appeared to be entirely possible at the time; indeed some foreign observers regarded it as inevitable. That was why there was no military district in the Far East, but a front consisting of three armies.

At the end of 1940, the secret transfer westwards of generals and troops, in entire divisions and corps, began. Many senior commanders left the Far East Front without being replaced, or at least without worthy successors. Major-General P. T. Kotov, the chief of operations in the front headquarters, was transferred secretly westwards in this way.

Major-General P. G. Grigorenko, who was a lieutenant-colonel at the Far Eastern Front headquarters at the time, recalls that 'Ivan Stepanovich Konev, Markian Mikhailovich Popov, Vasily Ivanovich Chuikov, and many other senior military commanders were called westwards even before Shtern was.' (*Memoirs: Detinets*, New York 1981, p. 246) Popov (later to become a full general) commanded the 1st Army, while Konev (subsequently Marshal of the Soviet Union) commanded the 2nd Army. I totally reject any idea that these generals were being transferred because a German invasion had been foreseen. The war found Popov in the post of officer commanding the Northern Front on the Finnish border, while Konev moved up to the Romanian frontier at the head of his heavy shock army.

General Konev took an interesting path from his position as officer commanding an army in the Far East to a similar post in an army on the Romanian border. Konev did not travel in a straight line. He dodged and weaved. Having given up the command of the 2nd Army in the Far East in April 1941 (*Soviet Military Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, p. 409), he then assumed command of the Trans-Baikal Military District. Having made his mark here, he then quietly made an unadvertised appearance in Rostov, and took command of the Northern Caucasus Military District. It was here that Konev completed the formation of the 19th Army and became its commanding officer. At the end of May 1941, in what General S. M. Shtemenko described as 'conditions of the strictest secrecy', he began to move the divisions and corps of his army up to the Romanian frontier. He held four posts in a short space of time. These stretched from the easternmost frontiers to the most western ones. Stalin always hid his best generals and marshals before every offensive operation (but

never before a defensive one). This particularly applied to Zhukov, Vasilevsky, Konev, Rokossovsky and Meretskov. In spring 1941, as always happened before all the most important offensives, Konev was covering up his tracks in such a way that even his closest friends would never know where he had gone.

Konev was not the only one who was covering up his tracks. Konev and other commanders temporarily held a number of posts as a blind; the same 'decoy' posting would often be passed from one officer to another. Colonel-General F. I. Kuznetsov gave up the command of the General Staff Academy to take over the Northern Caucasus Military District. He handed this over to Konev and then appeared on the East Prussian border, holding the post of officer commanding the North-West Front.

After General Konev had secretly disappeared from the Far East, the 2nd Army was left in the hands of General M. F. Terekhin, who was no substitute for a man of Konev's abilities. The situation was even more interesting in the 1st Army of the Far Eastern Front. After General Popov had left for the Northern Front, a worthy replacement, in the person of Lieutenant-General Andrei Ivanovich Eremenko (later Marshal of the Soviet Union) took his place. But Eremenko did not remain in charge for long. On 19 June 1941 he was ordered to hand over the 1st Army and report immediately to Moscow for another appointment. After the German invasion had begun, Eremenko became officer commanding the Western Front instead of General D. G. Pavlov. That was not the purpose of his visit to Moscow, however. On 19 June, such a turn of events had not been foreseen. Pavlov was firmly seated in his post of officer commanding the Western Front. Stalin must have called on Eremenko to fulfil some other mission which remains unknown, and possibly also unfulfilled.

I had the opportunity to meet Eremenko after he became a Marshal of the Soviet Union. I tried to sound him out on this subject without arousing his suspicions. My impression was that Eremenko was not dissimulating, but that he really did not know what Stalin needed him for on 19 June 1941. I pointed out to the Marshal that he had not been the only one in this position. I said that Sivkov, Kurdyumov, Zhadov, Petrov and Luchinsky had all been travelling on trains towards Moscow at the same time. The Marshal was very interested in all this. I regretted that I was not a Western historian with a passport of some democratic country in my pocket, for I was simply unable to take the conversation with the Marshal any further.

Eremenko was interested, and suggested another couple of generals who were moved from the Far East. Major-General N. E. Berzarin was deputy officer commanding the 1st Army. Eremenko told me something which he had left out of his memoirs. When he left the Far East, he handed over the command of the army to

his deputy Berzarin. Yet at the end of May, Berzarin was summoned by Stalin to Moscow and secretly appointed to command the 27th Army, then in the Baltic area not far from the German frontier.

Major-General Vassily Andreyevich Glazunov (later Lieutenant-General and officer commanding the Red Army airborne assault troops) was at the beginning of 1941 commanding the 59th Rifle Division in the 1st Army on the Far Eastern Front. Eremenko was very attached to the 1st Army, and did not want to see it left without a commander and at the mercy of Shelakhov, the 'headquarters rat'. But Stalin had already picked Eremenko's deputy, as well as the corps commanders, and the experienced divisional commanders had long since been transferred westwards. In the 59th Division there was only the experienced, martial clear-sighted General Glazunov. Eremenko told me that he immediately sent an enciphered message to the General Staff proposing that General Glazunov should be given the 1st Army. It was a big jump to go straight from a division to an army. But what else was there to be done when there were no more operational commanders left in the Far East?

Moscow immediately agreed that Glazunov was indeed a worthy commander, and in the enciphered reply ordered Glazunov to give up command of the division immediately, and instead take over command of the 3rd Airborne Assault Corps on the Romanian frontier.

At the beginning of June 1941, Stalin ordered that all Soviet airborne assault troops, including those which had recently been transferred from the Far East, should be concentrated on the western frontiers. Then at the last moment he assembled infantry and cavalry generals from distant frontiers and made them into commanders of airborne assault corps. This applied not only to Generals Glazunov and Zhadov, but to Generals M. A. Usenko, F. M. Kharitonov, and I. S. Bezuglyi as well.

The urgent transformation of infantry and cavalry generals into airborne assault officers is not a preparation for defence. It is not even a preparation for a counter-offensive. It is a sign of aggression in preparation; aggression which is inevitable, imminent, and on a vast scale.

CHAPTER 28

Why Stalin Deployed the Fronts

The war of the poor against the rich will be the most bloody war which has ever been waged between people.

F. ENGELS (*Works*, Vol. 2, p. 504,
Berlin 1959)

A 'front' is an operational-strategic grouping of armed forces. It includes several armies, air force formations, anti-aircraft defence, back-up units and formations, and rear units. Fronts do not exist in peacetime; military districts exist in their stead. A front is usually only created when war begins. (*Soviet Military Encyclopedia*, Vol. 8, p. 332)

The Far Eastern Front was set up within the Red Army in response to worsening relations with Japan in 1938. It consisted of the 1st and 2nd Armies, a tactical air force and reinforcement units. On 13 April 1941, a neutrality pact was signed with Japan. The Far Eastern Front, however, remained a front, and was not turned into a military district.

Fronts were established for short periods in 1939 and 1940 on the Soviet western frontiers in order to serve the 'liberation campaigns' into Poland, Romania and Finland. Once these campaigns had ended, the fronts were immediately disbanded and military districts were set up again to replace them. Historians have reproached Stalin for entering into pacts with both Germany and Japan, while maintaining a front only against Japan. This does indeed seem inconsistent at first glance; but Hitler was doing exactly the same thing. While he was deploying headquarters with impressive names against Britain, he was secretly moving his best generals up to the Soviet frontier. That is how a surprise strike is prepared.

Stalin had set up a front in the Far East, but the troops and the generals were secretly leaving it. Officially, the western frontiers still consisted of military districts, but here a build-up of troops was going on. Any comparison of the power of the Far East Front and that of any western military district would certainly not come down in favour of the front. While the Far East Front had three armies, all of them ordinary, the

Western Special Military District had four armies, including three shock and one heavy shock. Then three more armies belonging to the Second Strategic Echelon arrived on Western Special Military District territory. No one, on the other hand, was going to the Far Eastern Front; divisions and corps were being taken away from it. There was only one mechanized corps on the Far Eastern Front, while in the Western District there were six. There were no airborne assault troops on the Far Eastern Front, while in the Western District there was an entire corps. The Western Special Military District, moreover, was not the most powerful. The Kiev District was much more so.

The Far Eastern Front was not so much a front as a screen intended to show the whole world that war here was possible. But the five western military districts were also screens designed to show that no war was expected there. But the strike power concentrated in these districts after 1939 was rarely equalled by any Soviet front even during the heaviest battles of the war.

The front in the Far East was set up in such a way that everybody knew about it. In the western part of the Soviet Union, however, not one, but five fronts had been established in such a way that nobody knew about them. The Northern, North-West, Western, South-West and Southern Fronts were officially brought into being only after the German invasion. From February 1941, however, these names were already appearing in strictly secret Soviet documents. This security grading was later removed from a number of these documents, and they were put into academic circulation. I quote from one of them: 'In February 1941 the military councils in the frontier districts were sent instructions . . . that they should immediately equip the front command posts.' (*VIZH* 1978, No.4, p. 86)

Officially there were five military districts on the Soviet western borders. Unofficially, each military district was already preparing a front command post. Alongside the usual military-territorial structures, purely military ones were being created -the kind of structures which only spring up in time of war to lead the troops into battle.

Pro-Soviet historians assure us that peace existed between the Soviet Union and Germany until 22 June 1941, when this peace was allegedly violated by Germany. This hypothesis is not borne out by facts. The facts speak of the opposite. By deploying, command posts of the fronts in February 1941, the Soviet Union entered the war against Germany, although it did not officially declare it.

In peacetime the officer commanding a military district has a dual role. On the one hand, he is a purely military commander, with several divisions, sometimes several corps and even on occasions several armies under his command. On the other, he controls a strictly defined territory, and carries out the role of a military governor.

In the event of war, a military district on the frontier becomes a front. When this happens, three situations can arise. The first of these is where the front wages war in the territories of the former military districts. In this case the officer commanding the front continues to function both as a military commander and as a governor of the territories entrusted to him.

The second situation is where the front is forced to retreat under enemy pressure. In that event, the officer commanding the front will remain combat commander, and as he withdraws he will take along with him the organs of local government of his territory.

In the third scenario, the front moves forward on to enemy territory. It is only when this situation has been foreseen that the functions of the officer commanding are divided. He becomes a purely military commander and leads his troops forward. Some one of inferior rank must remain behind on the territory of the district to carry out the functions of military governor.

In February 1941, an event occurred which has so far been overlooked by modern historians. A new post for another deputy to the officer commanding was created in the Western Special Military District. What did this mean? Surely General D. G. Pavlov had enough deputies without yet another one! For several months this extra post of deputy remained vacant. Then Lieutenant-General Vladimir Nikolayevich Kurdumov arrived to take it up.

The significance of this event was considerable. In peacetime, General Pavlov, his deputy, Lieutenant-General I. V. Boldin, and Chief of Staff Major-General V. E. Klimovskikh were all to be found in Minsk. On mobilization, however, Pavlov was earmarked to become the officer commanding the Western Front,

Klimovskikh chief of staff of the Western Front, and Boldin the officer commanding the mobile group in the Western Front.

If the Western Front was meant to fight in Byelorussia, where it had been situated until the war began, there would have been no need to make any structural changes. But the Western Front was preparing to move on to enemy territory. It was for just such a circumstance that Lieutenant-General Kurdumov was brought in. Pavlov was to concentrate on purely military problems, while his new deputy would deal with territorial ones. When Pavlov led the Western Front into enemy territory, General Kurdumov would stay behind in Minsk to act as a purely territorial military governor, protecting the local authorities and lines of communication, controlling industry and transport, carrying out additional mobilization and preparing reserves for the front, which by then would have moved far ahead.

Kurdumov had commanded the Combat Training Directorate of the Red Army before being appointed to Minsk. From the viewpoint of the war of 'liberation', it was a splendid decision to have such an experienced general sitting in a place through which more and more young reservists would pass on their way westwards. He, better than anyone, would be able to give them their final instructions before going into battle.

Four armies, ten detached corps and ten air divisions then stationed on the territory of the Kiev Special Military District were also preparing to leave for enemy territory. They would be led by Colonel-General Mikhail Petrovich Kirponos, the officer commanding the South-West Front. With this in view, it became essential to split the two functions of the commanding officer. Here too an extra deputy's post was created, and Lieutenant-General V. F. Yakovlev was appointed to it. Kirponos would advance with his troops, while Yakovlev would remain in Kiev.

From the beginning of February onwards, the division of the two functions became increasingly evident. A secret command post was set up in Tarnopol. This was the centre of the military structure. The headquarters was kept on in Kiev to function as the centre of the territorial structure. A heavily reinforced underground command post for directing the territorial system was set up in Brovary, in the Kiev region. A command post of a very light type, consisting of dug-outs with one timber platform, was built in Tarnopol. This was entirely logical; why put up concrete casements when the military structure was not intended to remain in the Ukraine for long?

The structure was also divided in the Baltic Special Military District. The senior command staff moved to Panivejis, which from then onwards was to be the secret centre of the purely military structure of the North-West Front. A second-rate general, E. P. Safronov, was left behind in Riga to exercise military-territorial control after the main mass of Soviet troops had moved off westwards.

There was a slight difference in the Odessa Military District. Here it was not the headquarters of the front which was split off from the military district headquarters, but the headquarters for the 9th Army. Most officers belonging to the Odessa Military District headquarters, with its chief of staff Major-General M. V. Zakharov at their head, were secretly transferred to the headquarters of the 9th Army. Marshal of the Soviet Union I. S. Konev testifies that on 20 June the 9th Army headquarters were raised by a stand-to alert and secretly moved out of Odessa to the field command post. (*VIZH* 1968, No. 7, p. 42) Colonel-General Ya. T. Cherevichenko, officer commanding the Odessa Military District, had not been in Odessa for some time. He had secretly been in the Crimea, where he had taken command of the 9th Special Rifle Corps, which had arrived secretly from the Caucasus. Then, passing through Odessa by train, he went to the secret command post of the 9th Army, which had been entrusted to his command. Marshal of the Soviet Union M. V. Zakharov has stated that Cherevichenko was on a train when the German invasion began. (*Voprosy Istory*, 1970, No. 5, p. 46) Another general, N. E. Chibisov, appeared in Odessa *before* the German invasion began; his job was to remain behind to exercise military-territorial control after the 9th Army had left.

The Leningrad Military District was an exception. As in the other districts, a front - the Northern - was secretly set up, but in this case the structure was not divided. This was also logical. The Northern Front had until then made no preparations to advance far from Karelian territory, so two separate structures were not necessary. No extra deputy was appointed. Control of both military operations and of the territory would be exercised from the same centre, the headquarters of the Northern Front.

On 13 June, the day the TASS report was broadcast, these divisions in the control structures of all the western military districts - except Leningrad - were completed. On the same day, the People's Commissariat for Defence ordered all headquarters of the fronts to move to the field command posts.

From that point onwards there were two independent military systems of command in Byelorussia: the secretly created Western Front, commanded by General Pavlov with its command post in the forest near the Lesno railway station, and the Western Special Military District, under Lieutenant-General Kurdumov, with headquarters in Minsk. Two independent military control structures also came into being in the Ukraine, the South-West Front and the Kiev Special Military District. According to Marshal Bagramyan, Zhukov sent a special enciphered message that this development 'must be kept most strictly secret, and the headquarters personnel of the district must be warned to keep it so'. (*Tak Nachalas' Voina*, p. 83)

Lieutenant-General of Communications Troops P. M. Kur-ochkin, who at that time was a major-general and Chief of Communications of the North-West Front, describes the same situation in the Baltic:

Command elements and branches from headquarters began to arrive in the region of Panivejis. The district command was in fact turned into a front command although officially it went on being called a district command until the war began. A group of generals and officers, who had been given the job of running the district, was left behind in Riga. (*Na SZF*, p. 196, 1969)

The creation of two independent systems of control inevitably led to the creation of two independent systems of communications. Major-General Kurochkin personally ran the North-West Front communications, while Colonel N. P. Aki-mov, his former deputy, managed the independent communications system in the district.

General Kurochkin worked hard at setting up the front communication system. In order not to alert the enemy with a sudden upsurge in conversations on the new military channels, civilian communication lines were used. But the word 'civilian' must be placed between inverted commas. No such thing existed in the Soviet Union. The state communications system had been put on a complete war footing in 1939 and placed at the service of the army. The People's Commissariat (or Ministry) of Communications was placed directly under the orders of the People's Commissariat for Defence. In any normal country the military communications system is a component part of the general state communications system, but the reverse is the case in the Soviet Union. General state communications are a component part of military

communications; Ivan Terentievich Peresypkin, the People's Commissar for Communications of the USSR was officially a deputy to the chief of communications in the Red Army.

When the command of the North-West Front left for the field command post, the wartime communications system had been laid down beforehand:

All documents with the frequency plan, call-signs, and authentication signals were kept in the headquarters, for distribution to the troops in the event of war. There were several thousand radio stations in the district. Consequently at least a week was needed to put the work on a war footing. It proved impossible to do everything required in time. (Lieu-tenant-General P. M. Kurochkin, *Pozyvnye Fronta*, Moscow Voenizdat 1969, p. 115)

The entire procedure for changing over from a peacetime communications system to a wartime one was based on the assumption that a preliminary signal would come from Moscow at a time to be determined by Moscow. In other words, the plan was not drawn up to meet the conditions of a defensive war. It was drawn up to meet the conditions of a war which was offensive, aggressive and provided for a period of secret preparations.

The time for these final preparations to invade had now arrived. On 19 June Lieutenant-General P. S. Klenov, Chief of Staff of the North-West Front, issued an order to Kurochkin:

'Take action in accordance with the big plan. Do you understand what I'm talking about?'

'Yes, I understand everything,' I reported. (Kurochkin, *Na SZF*, p. 195)

It is a pity that we do not understand everything about the 'big plan'; no Soviet general has ever explained what it was. But we do understand that something connected with the 'big plan' should have happened in the

next few days. But, by taking the action he did, Hitler prevented the 'big plan' from being put into effect, and compelled the Soviet generals to improvise instead.

This is how General Kurochkin tried to ensure that the 'big plan' would be carried out:

The district communications branch sent documents dealing with the organization of radio communications ... to the headquarters of the armies and of formations under district command. All these documents, duly revised, had to pass along a channel leading through the corps, divisions, regiments, battalions and companies until they finally reached the operating team at every radio station. That would have taken, as I have said already, no less than a week. (*Ibid*, p. 118)

Top-secret information thus reached thousands of radio operators. It was an irreversible process. It was no longer possible to retrieve the secrets and hide them in the safes again. As soon as the material had left these safes, war had become quite unavoidable. Preparing an aggressive war is something like hatching a *coup d'etat*. A very small group of people make the plan. They do not trust the thousands who will take part in it with even a fragment of information. As soon as the leaders of the conspiracy reveal even the tiniest part of the plan to the thousands who will have a role in it, it then becomes totally unavoidable that the *coup* will happen. If they do not do this, the plotters lose their advantage of surprise, which is their greatest trump, and enable the enemy to respond with emergency measures.

But perhaps it was because Lieutenant-General Klenov anticipated German aggression that he ordered that elements of the 'big plan' should be revealed to these thousands who were to carry it out? Klenov, however, was quite categorical in his belief that a German invasion was not possible. He refused to believe it even after it had begun, and did nothing at all to repel the aggression after it had started. At the December 1940 meeting of the senior command staff, Klenov had suggested that only aggressive wars should be fought, and that these should be started by surprise attacks by the Red Army. He exceeded even the bold Zhukov in aggressiveness, and had the courage to argue with Zhukov in Stalin's presence about how a surprise attack should be made. Like Andrei Andreyevich Zhdanov, his protector in the Politburo, and indeed like many other Soviet military

and political leaders at the time including Stalin himself, he simply excluded the possibility that anyone else could make a surprise attack on the Soviet Union.

In the days which followed the publication of the TASS report on 13 June 1941, all the engines of war in the Soviet Union went into action. The deployment on the Soviet fronts had gone so far that thousands involved had already been let into secrets of extraordinary importance. The Soviet Union passed the point of no return in the middle of June 1941. After that, war was inevitable. If Hitler had decided to launch Operation Barbarossa a few weeks later, the Red Army would have reached Berlin much earlier than 1945.

When a large-scale offensive takes place, several fronts are engaged in operational action at the same time. This action has to be co-ordinated, and this co-ordination is done by the Representatives of the High Command.

These Representatives can help make the strategic leadership considerably more flexible in wartime. They have almost unlimited power in the field of combat. On the one hand, the Representative is a member of the supreme military leadership, and as such knows plans which the officer commanding a front does not have the right to know. On the other, he directs combat operations not from some office in Moscow but directly from the command post of a front or an army, where he presents himself just before the operation begins. The Representative is free from the daily routine work of the officer commanding the front and can devote all his attention to the most important issues. At a critical moment, he might find himself alongside the Supreme Commander in Chief, giving him essential advice; or else he might find himself sent by the Supreme Commander to the most critical sector where the fate of the war is being decided.

These Representatives were the best military minds in the country. Their appearance always meant that great events were about to happen.

The day the TASS report was published, many inexplicable events took place. My own information is fragmentary, inadequate, and at times contradictory. On the basis of the little information which can be

checked, however, the secret visit of the Representatives of the Soviet High Command to the western frontiers was clearly the main business of the day.

Among these Representatives was Lieutenant-General Pavel Rychagov, deputy People's Commissar for Defence. He was a favourite of Stalin and a personal friend of Zhukov. Although still only 29, he had already distinguished himself in air warfare in Spain, China, Khasan and at Khalkhin-Gol. He had commanded the 1st Army's air force in the Far East, and then the 9th Army's air force in the 'liberation' of Finland. On Stalin's personal orders, Rychagov always appeared where the Red Army was about to launch a surprise attack. His promotion was rapid. In 1940 Stalin appointed him a deputy chief of the Red Army Air Force; then in the same year first deputy chief; and in August of the same year the head of the Chief Directorate of the air force of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

In December 1940, a meeting was held of the Red Army's senior command staff to discuss the subject of war against Germany. It was attended by Stalin and the principal political leaders. Zhukov's proposal was to put the German Air Force out of action by delivering surprise attacks on German airfields, and then immediately launching powerful attacks by the land troops. (*Istoriya Sovetskoi Voennoi Mysli*, Izdanie Akademii Nauk SSR, Moscow 1980, p. 173) Pavel Rychagov warmly supported Zhukov's proposal. Even before Zhukov, he had recast the training of Soviet airmen in such a way that it almost totally excluded the training of pilots to fight air battles. Instead, they were trained to make sudden concentrated air strikes at enemy airfields. In his memoirs, Zhukov recalled the impassioned speech which Rychagov made at the meeting: 'General P. V. Rychagov, the chief of the air force of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, talked a lot of sense.' (*Vospominaniya I Razmyshleniya*, 1969, p. 194) It is only a pity that Rychagov's sensible speech still remains a Soviet state secret half a century after it was made.

Zhukov and Rychagov's arguments apparently convinced Stalin. In the course of the meeting and in the series of strategic map games which followed it, Stalin dismissed the Chief of the General Staff and appointed Zhukov to the post. A few days later Pavel Rychagov was also promoted. In spite of his comparatively modest rank, Lieutenant-General Rychagov was given an extremely high appointment, that of deputy to the People's Commissar for Defence. Stalin appointed Lieutenant-General P. F. Zhigarev to take over command of the air force from Rychagov. Freed from daily routine, Rychagov became a High Command Representative; it was a very high post with access to state secrets, and with no responsibility for day-to-day minor matters. Rychagov

became in his way a sort of minister without portfolio among the senior Soviet military leaders. He continued to work hard on his ideas of surprise, speed, and concentration, and on how to clear the skies for Soviet aircraft with several hours of concentrated bombing raids on enemy airfields. Zhukov and Rychagov, in fact, were preparing to do what Hitler did on 22 June 1941. As General Ivanov put it, 'The Nazi command simply succeeded in forestalling our troops in the two weeks preceding the outbreak of war.' (General of the Army S. P. Ivanov, *Nachal'nyi Period Voyny*, Moscow 1974, p. 212)

In the spring of 1941, Rychagov was permanently on standby, awaiting Stalin's orders to go anywhere that fateful decisions on the war had to be made. Now the hour had arrived. On 13 June 1941, under cover of the TASS report, Rychagov went secretly to the German frontier. Falsifiers of history explain Rychagov's appearance there in quite simple terms. Stalin was worried that the Germans might possibly attack, and so he sent Rychagov to the border to improve the defences there.

If Stalin had been anxious about defence, he should have pulled back the Soviet Air Force from the frontiers and re-based it in the depths of the country. The air force would have been quite capable of covering the frontier areas from the interior of the country, while the few hundred kilometres which lay between the airfields and the frontiers would have deprived the enemy of an ability to make a surprise attack on Soviet airfields. But General Rychagov's visit to the frontier did not coincide with the re-basing of Soviet aircraft in the depths of the country. On the contrary, it coincided with aircraft from the depths of the country being re-based right on the frontiers. In terms of defence, concentrating an air force on the frontiers is tantamount to suicide. But when an offensive is being prepared, it is absolutely essential to concentrate aircraft near the frontiers, so that they can be used over enemy territory to the full extent of their operating radius.

The German generals, incidentally, were doing the same thing, although they were some two weeks ahead, and were sparing no effort to re-base their air force close to the Soviet border. Had Stalin been the first to strike, we would now regard the German generals as madmen. But re-basing an air force near a frontier is madness only from a defensive viewpoint. In terms of an offensive, the German generals were doing everything right, as were their Soviet colleagues.

We can only guess why Rychagov went to the Soviet western border. After Operation Barbarossa began, Rychagov was arrested and executed on Stalin's orders. Why he was executed also remains a mystery. It could not have been for losing a vast number of Soviet aircraft on airfields near the frontier; Pavel Rychagov

had ceased to be responsible for the safety of Soviet aircraft in February 1941. Responsibility for that now lay with Lieutenant-General P. F. Zhigarev. Stalin did not shoot Zhigarev for having lost the aircraft. He did not even reproach him for it. On the contrary, the lieutenant-general rose to the rank of Air Chief Marshal and survived Stalin by ten years. If Stalin did not shoot Zhigarev, who bore the personal, direct and immediate responsibility for the basing of the air force and its security, why then shoot Rychagov, who did not have this responsibility?

It is my opinion that Rychagov went to the Soviet frontier on some crucial mission entirely unconnected with the security of the Soviet Air Force. For failing to complete that crucial mission, of which we know nothing, Stalin shot the youngest deputy to the People's Commissar for Defence that the Red Army ever had.

Colonel-General A. D. Loktionov, candidate member of the Central Committee, held the post of deputy to the People's Commissariat of Defence as early as 1937. Loktionov commanded the Soviet Air Force until 1940, when in the summer of that year Stalin for some reason gave Loktionov the opportunity to make a very detailed study of the frontier with East Prussia. He sent Loktionov off to command the Baltic Military District, which embraced the territories of the recently 'liberated' Baltic states. In February and March 1941 Stalin began secretly to assemble the Supreme Command Staff in Moscow. Loktionov handed over command of the Baltic Military District (the North -West Front) to Colonel-General F. I. Kuznetsov, and set off for Moscow 'for medical treatment'. By 13 June, all Loktionov's illnesses were cured and he secretly returned to the frontier with East Prussia.

We know that Lieutenant-General of Engineering Troops D. Karbyshev had visited the Soviet western border even before this. One of Karbyshev's pupils, Lieutenant-General of Engineering Troops E. Leoshenya, has stated that 'Karbyshev was on a mission for the General Staff in the area of the western state frontier.' (*VIZH* 1980, No. 10, p.96) Karbyshev was not just another of those professors from the military academies who were gathering on the frontier, but one of the Soviet High Command Representatives. He was actively and energetically preparing an offensive operation. It was in Karbyshev's presence that Soviet frontier guards were pulling down the frontier barriers, in order to clear the way for an extra-high-power and very swift Soviet operation. It was Karbyshev who was teaching the crews of the latest T-34 Soviet tanks how to overcome enemy defences and to ford frontier rivers. In addition, along with commanders from the fronts and the armies, Karbyshev was making reconnaissance trips.

Before taking even one step forward, a commander will inspect the terrain which lies before him. Much information will, of course, have been gathered in advance by reconnaissance. Although the commander will certainly trust his reconnaissance, he will always want to inspect the whole terrain personally. This is no empty ritual. Before moving his troops forward, a commander must get the feel of the land. There's a hollow here—would the tanks get bogged down in the mud? There's a small bridge there. Haven't the supports been sawn through? And a counter-attack could come from that wood there . . .

If the commander cannot pass over the whole of the terrain in his imagination, if he is unable to assess all the difficulties which his soldiers will have to face, the price he will pay will be defeat. That is why, before an offensive battle, every commander, irrespective of rank, will put on a soldier's uniform and crawl on his stomach in the mud alongside the state frontier or forward area; and why, if he is in a forward area, he will spend many hours inspecting the terrain in front of him, as he tries to foresee and envisage before the battle all the difficulties which might be awaiting him tomorrow.

This visual study of the enemy and the terrain by the commander is called reconnaissance. It is not the most agreeable surprise when enemy reconnaissance groups turn up on your frontier. It is not too bad if it is only a tank division commander spending long hours watching you through binoculars from the other side of the border. But imagine the officer commanding a Soviet military district appearing on your frontier, not alone, but accompanied by a member of the Politburo, and spending not hours, but weeks at the frontier posts! What would you think then?

It was like that before every 'liberation'. In January 1939, K. A. Meretskov, the officer commanding the Leningrad Military District, accompanied by A. A. Zhdanov, shortly to become a Politburo member, drove up and down the whole of the Finnish frontier in a motor car. Their trips went on throughout spring, summer and autumn. They finished their expeditions as autumn was drawing to a close and returned to Leningrad. The next thing was that the 'Finnish militarist clique provoked war'.

From early 1941, German officers and generals began, gradually at first and then with increasing intensity, to reconnoitre the German side of the frontier. There is a famous photograph on my table showing General

Guderian with officers from his headquarters carrying out the final reconnaissance near Brest-Litovsk on the night of 22 June 1941. The German generals are looking at Soviet territory through binoculars. As Operation Barbarossa approached, Soviet generals and marshals noticed an increasing number of German reconnaissance groups on the border. (*Glavnyi Marshal Aviatsy A. A. No-vikov v Nebe Leningrada*, Moscow Nauka 1970, p. 41) The German reconnaissance groups camouflaged what they were doing by every possible means. They donned the uniforms of frontier guards and ordinary soldiers, but an experienced eye could of course distinguish between a reconnaissance group and a frontier patrol. Reports began to flow from the Soviet border that German officers were carrying out intensive reconnaissance. This was a clear sign that war was approaching. Marshal of the Soviet Union M. V. Zakharov, then a major-general and 9th Army chief of staff, has said that from April 1941 onwards, a 'new situation arose'. It took the form of groups of officers dressed in German and Romanian Army uniforms appearing on the river Prut. All the signs were that they were carrying out reconnaissance. (*Voprosy Istory* 1970, No. 5, p. 43)

Reconnaissance is preparation for an offensive. What were the Soviet commanders doing? Why did they not take immediate measures to repel the coming aggression, the inevitability of which was being confirmed by the presence of the enemy reconnaissance groups? The Soviet generals did not react to what they saw for one simple reason: the Soviet generals were busy carrying out their own reconnaissance.

Major-General Petr Vassilyevich Sevast'yanov was then head of the political branch of the 5th Czechoslovak Proletariat Vitebsk Red Banner Rifle Division of the 16th Rifle Corps of the 4th Army of the North-West Front. He recalled how, 'observing the German frontier guards from a distance of something like 20—30 paces, and exchanging glances with them, we never gave the appearance of realizing that they were there, or that we were in the slightest degree interested in them'. (*Neman-Volga-Dunai*, Moscow Voenizdat 1961, p. 7)

General Sevast'yanov's account shows that he observed the German frontier guards on more than one occasion. In fact it happened regularly. So here is a question: Comrade General, what precisely were you doing so close to the frontier? If you were disturbed at the thought that the Germans might invade, then you should have ordered five or six fences of barbed wire to be stretched out along the frontier, so that nobody could slip through. You should have laid the mined traps more densely. Then you should have laid a real minefield about three kilometres deep behind the barbed-wire entanglements, then dug anti-tank ditches behind the minefields and covered them with static flame-throwers, and behind these, another 20-30

stretches of barbed-wire entanglements, this time on metal stakes, or better still, steel rails set in concrete. Further back still, another minefield - a false one, with the real minefield behind it. Then dig another anti-tank ditch. Then behind all this, construct forest traps, and so on indefinitely.

If the general had really been preparing for defence, there would have been no need for him to stare at the German frontier guards. He would have had to study not foreign territory but his own, and the more deeply he did it, the better. Near the frontier he could have kept small mobile detachments which, in the event of an attack, could easily have withdrawn through secret gaps in the engineered defences zone, mining the path as it went.

This was Finland's exemplary approach when it was preparing to defend itself. The Finnish generals had certainly no need to stand on the border and scrutinize foreign territory. The Soviet Army, however, did not put up any engineered defences on its frontiers, and Soviet generals, like their German colleagues, ended up spending weeks and months just a few paces from the state frontier.

Colonel D. I. Kochetkov recalls that the commander of the Soviet tank division in Brest-Litovsk, Major-General Puganov, selected both the site for his divisional headquarters, and the position of his office in it, so that he could 'sit in the divisional commander's office with Colonel Commissar A. A. Illarionov and look out of the window through binoculars at the German soldiers on the opposite bank of the Western Bug.' (*Zakrytyimi Lyukami*, Moscow Voenizdat 1962, p. 8)

Idiocy, we cry in indignation. Once the war had begun, it would be a simple matter to fire an automatic weapon from the opposite bank at the divisional commander's window, or better still, fire a cannon at it. The divisional headquarters was a sitting target. But let us not be too indignant. Seen from the viewpoint of attack, everything falls into place. Guderian was doing exactly the same thing on the opposite bank. His German tank group on the other side had also been moved right up to the river, and *he* was looking out of *his* window through binoculars at the Soviet side. Sometimes Guderian, hiding his identity, would appear with his binoculars at the river's edge. Just before Operation Barbarossa began, he even stopped trying to disguise himself. There he stood in his general's uniform, along with his officers, looking through binoculars, just like his Soviet enemies. Let us not call the Soviet generals idiots, for we do not see anything idiotic in what the German generals were doing. It was simply the normal preparation for an offensive. It is always done like that, in all armies including both the Soviet and the German. The only difference was that the Soviet Union was

preparing its operation on an incomparably greater scale than the German Operation Barbarossa. That is why the Soviet commanders began their reconnaissance activities considerably earlier than the German commanders, although they did not intend to complete them until July 1941.

In July 1940, on the orders of General K. A. Meretskov, the entire western frontier was reconnoitred. Thousands of Soviet commanders of all ranks took part in it, including generals and marshals holding the most senior posts. Meretskov himself, who had recently surveyed the Finnish frontier, now did the same thing on the Romanian and German frontiers. Then, accompanied by Colonel-General M. P. Kirponos, the officer commanding the South-West Front, Meretskov repeated the reconnaissance along the whole sector of the Kiev Special Military District. 'From Kiev', he recalled, 'I went to Odessa, where I met Major-General M. V. Zakharov, the District Chief of Staff. I went with him to the Romanian cordon. We looked across to the other bank, and saw some military figures looking at us.' (*Na Sluzhbe Narodu*) This same General Zakharov had said in April 1941 that the reconnaissance being done by groups of German generals had brought about a 'new situation'. It is interesting to speculate whether it occurred to him or his fellow officers that the German reconnaissance activities which began in April 1941 were simply a response to the concentrated Soviet reconnaissance which had been going on since July 1940?

Meretskov then hastened from the Odessa Military District to Byelorussia, where he joined General D. G. Pavlov in carefully reconnoitring the Soviet-German frontier and the territory behind it. After a brief visit to Moscow, Meretskov went again to the Northern Front. He said in passing that he had not found the officer commanding the North-West Front in his headquarters, because he was now spending a great deal of time on the frontier. Lieutenant-General M. M. Popov, the officer commanding the Northern Front, was not at his headquarters either. He too was on the frontier.

In 1945 Stalin and his generals launched a brilliant surprise strike at Japanese troops, and seized Manchuria, northern Korea and several Chinese provinces. The preparations to deliver this surprise attack were made in exactly the same way as the preparations had been made to attack Germany in 1941. The same Meretskov turned up on the frontier. He was by then a Marshal of the Soviet Union. He appeared secretly on the Manchurian frontier under the pseudonym of 'Colonel-General Maksimov'. Reconnaissance was one of the main elements in his preparations. 'He went all over every sector in a cross-country vehicle and even on

horseback in places.' (*Red Star*, 7 June 1987) All Soviet generals and marshals did the same before every offensive. Their opposite numbers in the Wehrmacht, Guderian, Manstein, Rommel and Kleist, did the same.

Commanders of Soviet divisions and corps stationed in the depths of Soviet territory were frequent visitors to the frontier. Marshal Rokossovsky (then a major-general commanding a mechanized corps some way back from the frontier) recalls that he often visited I. I. Fedyuninsky, whose corps was directly on the frontier. General Fedyuninsky recalls in his memoirs that his colleagues, including Rokossovsky, did indeed pay frequent visits. The memoirs of Soviet marshals and generals contain hundreds, even thousands, of such instances.

Marshal of the Soviet Union K. S. Moskalenko (then a major-general of artillery and commander of the 1st Anti-Tank Brigade of the High Command Reserve, the RGK) makes a direct connection between the TASS report and the sharply increased involvement of Soviet commanders in reconnaissance. When Major-General of Tank Troops M. I. Potanov, the officer commanding the 5th Army, discussed the TASS report with General Moskalenko, he told him to pick 'some good people who are literate in the military sense and go off to the frontier. Let them do some reconnaissance in the area and observe the Germans and what they are doing. You too will find it useful.' (*Na Yugo-Zapadnom Napravleny*, Moscow Nauka 1961, p.21)

In a defensive operation there is nothing for an anti-tank brigade to do in a forward area. The commanding officer of an army will throw an anti-tank brigade into battle only in a really critical situation, when the enemy has already broken through the defences of the battalions, the regiments, the brigades, the divisions and the corps, when a crisis of army proportions has arisen, and when the direction of the enemy's main thrust is quite clear. This, however, could only happen far in the depths of the Soviet defences.

General Moskalenko's brigade, however, was neither an army nor a front brigade. It was a brigade of the RGK, the High Command Reserve. In defensive action, it would be held in reserve for an even more serious situation, where the army and even the whole front had been broken, and a crisis on a strategic scale had arisen. In order to solve the strategic crisis, the brigade would have to be situated not on the frontier, but dozens or even hundreds of kilometres from it, in the place where the actual strategic crisis had arisen. When defensive operations are in preparation, the commander of an RGK anti-tank brigade has absolutely no reason to be anywhere near a frontier.

But if a grand-scale Soviet offensive were being set up to move from the L'vov salient into the heart of enemy territory, then the left flank of the most powerful grouping of troops ever seen would be covered by the Carpathians (and the mountain armies who were turning up there), while the right flank would have to be covered by an extra-high-power anti-tank formation right on the frontier. That was where the brigade was, and where General Moskalenko in person set off on General Potanov's orders to reconnoitre enemy territory.

If someone should attempt to explain this Soviet grand-scale reconnaissance by saying that the Soviet Union was preparing for defence, I would remind him that there were very many sappers, including some of the best, in the Soviet reconnaissance groups. If defences are being set up, there is no point in having a sapper look at enemy terrain. He has enough work to do on his own ground. The deeper he moves into his own territory, the more work the sapper will have to do. But Soviet sappers for some reason were spending long hours examining enemy territory.

If these grandiose reconnaissance operations had a defensive purpose, then they should not have been performed on the frontier. Positions suitable for defending should have been selected and reconnoitred some hundred kilometres inside the country. Then they should have been thoroughly prepared for defensive battles. That done, the entire senior command staff should have fallen back to the old frontier lines to reconnoitre these old abandoned positions, and then deeper still into Soviet territory, to the Dnieper line for example, to prepare still more defences.

Reconnaissance from frontier posts is reconnaissance for aggression.

The Politburo held a secret session on 21 June 1941. According to the Soviet historian V. Anfilov, 'Communist Party leaders and members of the Soviet government were in the Kremlin throughout the day of 21 June, and resolved some state and military problems of the utmost importance.' (*Bessmertnyi Podvig*, Moscow Nauka 1971, p. 185)

Only four of the problems under discussion at this meeting are public knowledge. It is not known how many other problems were discussed that day. The first of the decisions which we know about was to arm the Red

Army with a BM-13 salvo-fire mobile installation; to begin production in series of BM-13 installations and M-13 rocket missiles; and also to begin forming rocket artillery units. The BM-13 was given its unofficial name of Katyusha in the weeks which followed.

The second Politburo decision was to set up front formations based on the western frontier military districts. (Lieutenant-General P. A. Zhilin, corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, *Velikaya Otechestfennaya Voina*, Moscow I PL 1973, p. 64) The fronts of course existed before then; the Politburo was merely formalizing decisions which had already been taken. Nevertheless, the decision of 21 June is supremely important because it provides official confirmation of the fact that five fronts were set up and formalized in secret *before* the German invasion, not after it.

The Politburo session lasted all day and continued far into the night. A few hours later, Zhukov rang Stalin and tried to convince him that something unusual was going on on the frontier. Many eyewitnesses and historians have described that moment. There is no doubt that not only Stalin but Molotov, Zhdanov and Beria all refused to believe that a German invasion was possible. Their unwillingness to believe this is confirmed by everything the Red Army did: anti-aircraft guns did not fire on German aircraft; Soviet fighters were forbidden to shoot down German planes; troops in the First Echelon had their ammunition taken from them; and draconian orders not to give in to provocation flowed from the General Staff. It is clear from this that the fronts were set up not to repel a German invasion – which the Soviet High Command did not believe was possible -but for some other purpose.

The third decision taken by the Politburo that day was to set up a group of armies of the High Command Reserve (RGK). Marshal of the Soviet Union S. M. Budennyi, first deputy to the People's Commissariat for Defence, was appointed its commanding officer. Major-General A. P. Pokrovsky (later a colonel-general) became the group's chief of staff. Seven armies of the Second Strategic Echelon, which had been moved secretly into the western areas of the country, joined the new army group.

In his memoirs, Colonel-General Pokrovsky called the new formation 'the group of troops of the Stavka Reserve'. (VIZH 1978, No. 4, p. 64) This name indicates the nature of the fourth decision made at this meeting: to set up a Supreme Command Stavka, the supreme body which controls the armed forces in war.

It is quite possible that the decisions to set up the group of armies and the Supreme Command Stavka had been taken previously and were merely ratified at the Politburo meeting of June 21. Evidence of this is provided by repeated indications that the German invasion found Major-General A. P. Pokrovsky already at his battle post in the western part of the country. (F/ZHi978, No. n, p. 126)

The fact is that before the German invasion occurred, the Second Strategic Echelon was not just seven different armies but a fighting machine with one single leadership. Why was this done? In a defensive war, a single leadership for the armies of the Second Strategic Echelon would have been entirely unnecessary. (It was in fact dissolved even before the Second Strategic Echelon came up against the enemy.) In peacetime the Second Strategic Echelon was not needed at all. Nor was there anywhere for it to train or quarter in the European part of the country.

The Politburo meeting gave the overall leadership of the South-West and Southern Fronts to Zhukov, and of the Northern Front to Meretskov. (General S. P. Ivanov and Major-General N. Shekhovtsev, *VIZH* 1981, No. 9, p. 11) Meretskov had commanded an army in the 'liberation' of Finland not long before. He was now sent back there as High Command Representative. Zhukov had recently been in command of the Southern Front when the eastern areas of Romania were 'liberated'. He was now sent back there as High Command Representative to co-ordinate the operations of the two fronts.

Meretskov left immediately. Zhukov delayed leaving Moscow for a few hours, and Operation Barbarossa caught him in the General Staff building. But that was chance. Had Barbarossa begun a few hours later, then Zhukov himself would have become part of that raging torrent flowing towards the western borders of the country, carrying along with it generals from the General Staff, *kombrigs* from the GULAG, labour-camp prisoners and their guards, commanders from the reserve, and military academy students and their teachers from far and wide.

Soviet historians say of the German commanders that 'right up to the time of the invasion of the USSR in June, von Brauchitsch and Halter made one journey after another to visit the troops'. (Anfilov, *Bessmertny Podvig*, 1923, p. 65) Were Zhukov and Meretskov behaving any differently?

The operations of the two armies were strikingly similar. As the one did not know what the other was going to do, the Wehrmacht and the Red Army copied each other down to the last detail. The Soviet commanders

moved their command posts nearer the frontier, like their German colleagues; the Red Army concentrated two extra-high-power groupings on the flanks in frontier salients just as the German Army had done. Soviet aircraft were concentrated right on the frontier, just like the German aircraft. Soviet pilots were forbidden to shoot down German aircraft until a specific moment, just as German pilots were forbidden to shoot down Soviet planes, so as not to set off the conflict before its time, and so that the attack when it came should be a complete surprise. Hitler's command post was near Rastenburg in East Prussia, while the Soviet Chief Forward Command Post (GPKP) was near Vilnius. They are exactly the same distance from the frontier; if the Soviet and German chief command posts were marked on a map, and the map was then folded along the frontier, the two marks would come together.

After the Politburo meeting on 21 June had ended, many of its members dispersed immediately to their war posts. Zhdanov, who had controlled Finland's 'liberation', got ready to go to Leningrad on 23 June. Khrushchev, who had controlled the 'liberation' of the eastern provinces of Poland and Romania, set off for Kiev, and possibly for Tiraspol' as well. Andreev, who was responsible in the Politburo for war transportation (General A. A. Epishev, *Partiya i Artniya*, Moscow IPL 1980, p. 176) sped along the Trans-Siberian Railway in order to accelerate the movement of the Second Strategic Echelon armies. He was seen next day in Novosibirsk. (Lieutenant-General S. A. Kalinin, *Razmyshleniya o Minuvshem*, Moscow Voenizdat 1963, p. 131)

The Politburo's secret decision to deploy the five fronts on the Soviet western frontiers inescapably committed the Soviet Union to beginning active operations. Each of the Soviet fronts were consuming, among other things, up to 60,000 head of cattle per month. (Marshal S. K. Kurkotkin, *Tyl SVSvVO V*, Moscow Voenizdat 1977, p. 325) By the following year, more than three million head of cattle would be needed to feed these five fronts. In addition to these, the seven armies of the Second Strategic Echelon and three NKVD armies which had been deployed behind them all had to be fed, as well as four fleets, the Soviet troops who were preparing to 'liberate' Iran, the air force, the troops of the anti-aircraft defences and, above all, the war industry.

The Soviet General Staff were clearly concerned:

In spite of the great successes in the sphere of agricultural development on the eve of war, the grain problem has not been solved because of a number of reasons. State deliveries and purchases of grain did not meet all the country's needs for bread. (*VIZH* 1961, No. 7, p. 102)

A. G. Zverev, the Stalinist People's Commissar for Finances and member of the Central Committee, claimed that 'by the beginning of 1941 the number of head of cattle we had was below the level in 1916'. (*Zapiski Ministra*, Moscow IPL 1973, p. 188) It must be borne in mind that the level of 1916 was not the normal level for Russia, but the level to which the country's agriculture had sunk after two ruinous years of war. There were less head of cattle in the Soviet Union in 'peacetime' than there had been in Russia at the height of World War I. At these catastrophic levels, disorders can break out, the normal social structure can break down and crowds can take to the streets.

Having themselves been carried to power on a wave of disorders, the communists did not improve the country's food situation. They worsened it to the point where the country was still trying after a quarter of a century to reach the very low level to which the economy had sunk as a result of the Great War. Stalin created a colossal army and a colossal war industry, but for this he sacrificed the nation's patrimony which had been accumulated over the centuries, and also the nation's standard of living which he lowered to below the level at which people were living during the Great War.

From the beginning of 1939, Stalin began to transfer the resources of a catastrophically weakened agriculture to the army and war industry. The army and industry swiftly put on weight, while agriculture became horrifying thin. The process gathered speed. The 1,320 military trains laden with motor vehicles on the Soviet western frontier came not from the war industry but from the collective farms. In May 1941, 800,000 reservists were secretly mobilized into the Red Army. They came not only from the labour camps, as we have seen, but also from the collective farms. There were reserved occupations in industry, but not in agriculture. Thus the mobilization added to the number of mouths to feed, while reducing the number of agricultural labourers to feed them.

The existence of five voracious fronts, and the secret mobilization of peasants and technicians before the harvest had been gathered, would have led inevitably to a famine in 1942, even without any intervention by

the Germans. Once the all-consuming fronts had been deployed, there was no option but to send them into action the same year. If they stayed where they were, they would quite simply have nothing left to eat. A surprise attack by the Red Army in 1941, on the other hand, held the promise of new rich territories with abundant reserves of food. Even if these supplies proved inadequate, it would not matter too much; a famine in the middle of a war is understandable and can always be explained away.

The only Soviet marshal whom Stalin trusted completely was B. M. Shaposhnikov. As early as 1929, Shaposhnikov had expressed the categorical opinion that it was impossible to mobilize hundreds of thousands and millions of people and keep them in prolonged inactivity in the frontier area. (*Mozg Army*, Vol. 3, GIZ, 1929) It is much easier to control an army in the course of a war than millions of armed and hungry men boiling over with frustration and resentment against their leaders.

When he set up the fronts, Stalin destroyed the already unstable balance between his huge armies and the country's exhausted, ruined agriculture. It was all or nothing, and Stalin could no longer wait until 1942 to launch an offensive.

CHAPTER 29

Why Stalin Did Not Trust Churchill

Between June 1940 and the German invasion of the Soviet Union a year later, an interesting correspondence took place between Winston Churchill and Josef Stalin. The letters which the embattled British leader addressed to the Soviet head of state have assumed an almost legendary quality, and are known to history as 'Churchill's Warning'. It is widely believed that in these letters Churchill warned Stalin of the impending German attack on the Soviet Union. Much energy has been expended in speculating why Stalin failed to heed this friendly and obviously well-informed advice.

Perhaps we should be asking, why *should* Stalin have trusted Churchill? After all, Churchill had been an implacable opponent of communism since 1918, when he had proposed an alliance with Germany against the newly-formed Soviet state. Lenin himself had described Churchill as 'the worst hater of Soviet Russia'. (PSS, Moscow, Vol. 14, p. 350) Under the circumstances, it is hardly surprising if Stalin treated any message from Churchill with a considerable degree of scepticism.

One must also bear in mind the political background to World War II. Germany was most disadvantageously placed in the diplomatic war of the 1930s. Situated in the heart of Europe, it was at the centre of all conflicts. Whatever war might begin in Europe, Germany would almost inevitably be involved in it. Therefore the diplomatic strategy of many countries in the 1930s boiled down to this attitude - you go to war with Germany, and I shall try to stay out of it. The Munich agreement of 1938 was a striking model of this philosophy.

Stalin and Molotov won the diplomatic war of the 1930s. With the Molotov—Ribbentrop Pact, Stalin gave the green light for World War II, of which he remained a 'neutral' observer, while training a million parachutists as a contingency against 'any surprises'.

Britain and France lost the diplomatic war and were then compelled to fight a real war, from which France made a rapid exit. Where did Britain's political interest lie? Looking at the situation through the eyes of the

Kremlin, Churchill could have only one political aspiration – to find a lightning-conductor for the German *Blitzkrieg* and deflect the German attack to anywhere else other than Britain. In the second half of 1940, only the Soviet Union could be such a lightning-conductor.

Put more simply, Britain (in Stalin's opinion, which he openly expressed on 10 March 1939) wanted a clash between the Soviet Union and Germany, while it stood aside from the fight. I do not know whether that was Churchill's intention or not, but that is exactly how Stalin would have seen every move made by the British government and its diplomats. As Admiral of the Fleet N. G. Kuznetsov put it, 'Stalin of course had more than enough grounds for thinking that England and America were seeking to have us collide head-on with Germany.' (*Nakanune*, 1966, p. 321)

The strategic situation in Europe also influenced Stalin's response. The concentration of power against weakness is the main principle of strategy. Germany was unable to apply this principle in World War I because it was fighting on two fronts. Attempts to concentrate great efforts on one front automatically led to the weakening of the other front and the enemy immediately exploited it. As a result, Germany had to renounce a strategy of destruction in favour of the only other alternative, a strategy of attrition. But Germany's resources were limited, while the resources of its enemies were unlimited. A war of attrition for Germany therefore could only end in catastrophe.

Both the German General Staff and Hitler himself understood that a war on two fronts would be catastrophic for Germany. In 1939-40, Germany always had in effect only one front. The German General Staff therefore was able to apply the concentration principle, and it did so brilliantly, concentrating the enormous German military power first against one enemy, then against the other.

The main problem facing German strategy was to prevent war breaking out on a second front. As long as the Germans were fighting on one front only, they won brilliant victories. Speaking at a meeting with High Command staff of the German armed forces on 23 November 1939, Hitler said that a war against the Soviet Union could begin only after the war in the West had ended.

Now supposing that someone had told you in 1940 that Hitler intended to renounce that great principle of strategy, and instead of concentration was preparing to disperse his forces. Someone keeps on whispering in your ear that Hitler quite intentionally wants to repeat the biggest mistake Germany made in World War I.

Every schoolboy knows that war on two fronts is suicide for Germany. World War II was to prove this rule once again, and also that, for Hitler personally, war on two fronts would be suicide in the purest sense of the word.

If Soviet Military Intelligence had reported anything like this, I should have advised General Golikov, the head of the GRU, to give up his post, go back to his academy and make another study of the reasons for the German defeat in World War I. If some neutral person from outside had told me about this suicidal war, I should have replied that Hitler was not an idiot, but that you, dear friend, certainly are one if you think that Hitler will begin a war on two fronts of his own free will.

Churchill was more interested than anyone else in the world in Hitler having not one, but two fronts. In such a situation, Churchill had too great a vested interest for Stalin to believe what he said.

Apart from the purely strategic and political situations, account must also be taken of the environment in which Churchill wrote his messages and Stalin read them.

France fell on 21 June 1940. The piracy of German U-boats increased sharply on the sea-routes. There hung over Britain, an island nation with close trade links with the rest of the world, the threat of a naval blockade and the most acute crisis in trade, industry and finance. Worse still, the German military machine, which at that point seemed invincible to many, was making intensive preparations to land on the British Isles.

It was in this environment that Churchill wrote to Stalin on 25 June. On 30 June, the German armed forces captured Guernsey in the Channel Islands. In a thousand years of British history, there have been few occasions when an enemy has landed on the British Isles. What was to follow? A landing on mainland Britain? Guernsey was taken without resistance. For how long would Britain resist?

Stalin received Churchill's message the day after Germany had seized Guernsey.

Where did Churchill's interest lie, one may ask? Did he want to save the dictatorship in the Soviet Union, or save the British Empire? I believe that it was the interests of Britain which made Churchill write his letter. If

we can understand this, surely Stalin must have understood it as well? For Stalin, Churchill was not an unbiased observer who out of friendly sentiments was giving warning of danger, but a man in serious difficulties, needing help and allies in a conflict against a fearful enemy. Stalin therefore was very cautious towards Churchill's letters.

Churchill wrote several letters to Stalin. But unluckily they all reached Stalin at times when Churchill was in great difficulties. The best-known letter in this series reached Stalin on 19 April 1941. It has attracted considerable interest from historians, all of whom agree that it was a serious warning to Stalin. But let us consider Churchill's position rather than the text of the letter. The German Army took Belgrade on 12 April. Rommel reached the Egyptian frontier on 13 April. Yugoslavia surrendered to Germany on 14 April, and St Paul's Cathedral in London was damaged in an air raid on 16 April. Greece was on the point of surrender and British troops there were in a catastrophic situation; it had become a question of whether or not they could be evacuated.

Stalin might have suspected not only Churchill's motives, but also his sources of information. Churchill wrote the letters in June 1940. Why did Churchill not send similar letters to the French government and to his own troops on the Continent in May of that year?

Churchill had written to Stalin in April 1941, a month after the German armed forces executed a brilliant operation to capture Crete. Why was British intelligence, Stalin might have thought, working so well in the interests of the Soviet Union, while it was doing nothing in British interests?

Finally, there is a more serious reason why Stalin did not trust Churchill's 'warnings': contrary to popular belief, Churchill was not warning Stalin about a German invasion.

Communist propaganda has done much to build up the myth about Churchill's 'warnings'. Khrushchev used to quote Churchill's message of 18 April 1941 to Stalin in order to do this. V. Anfilov, that prominent Soviet military historian and highly refined falsifier of history, quotes the message in all his books. Zhukov gives the message in full, and General S. P. Ivanov does the same. The official *History of the Great Motherland*

War constantly hammers Churchill's warnings into our heads and quotes his 18 April message in full. The text of Churchill's message can be found in hundreds of Soviet books and articles:

I have received reliable information from a trustworthy source that the Germans, after deciding that Yugoslavia had fallen into their clutches, that is on 20 March, began to transfer three armoured divisions, of the five stationed in Romania, into the southern part of Poland. As soon as they learnt of the Serbian revolution, this transfer was cancelled. Your excellency will easily appreciate the significance of these facts.

All Soviet sources publish Churchill's message in this form, insisting and assuring that it was a 'warning'. I personally see no warning here. Churchill is talking about three tank divisions. This is many by Churchill's standards. By Stalin's, it is not a great deal. Stalin himself at the time was secretly setting up 63 tank divisions, each one of which was stronger than a German division both in number and quality of tanks. If we consider that a report about three tank divisions amounted to a 'warning' that aggression was in preparation, we need not in that case accuse Hitler of aggressive intentions. German intelligence had already submitted reports to Hitler about dozens of Soviet tank divisions which were grouping on the borders of Germany and Romania.

Churchill suggested that Stalin assess 'the significance of these facts'. How could they be assessed? Poland historically has always been the gate through which all aggressors have passed from Europe to Russia. Hitler wanted to transfer tanks to Poland, but he changed his mind.

Compared to Poland, Romania was a very bad springboard for aggression. German troops would be harder to supply there than in Poland. In an attack from Romania the road to the vital heartland of Russia would be longer and harder for an aggressor, who would have to overcome a multitude of barriers, including the lower reaches of the river Dnieper.

Had Stalin been preparing himself for defence, and had he believed Churchill's 'warning', he should have heaved a sigh of relief and relaxed his military preparations. In addition, Churchill gave the reason why the

German troops were staying in Romania instead of being transferred to Poland: the Germans had problems in Yugoslavia, particularly in Serbia.

Britain at that time was waging very intensive diplomatic and military activity throughout the entire Mediterranean basin, particularly in Greece and Yugoslavia. Churchill's telegram was of enormous importance, but it could in no way be regarded as a warning. It was to a much greater degree an invitation to Stalin. The Germans wanted to transfer divisions to Poland, but have been forced to divert them elsewhere. You have nothing to fear, more so since these divisions in Romania have their backs turned to you. Assess these facts and act!

When Stalin got into a critical situation in the war, he too sent similar messages to Churchill and Roosevelt: Germany is concentrating its main forces against me, with its back turned to you. This is the best time for you — open the second front quickly! Then again came the turn of the western allies. When they got into serious difficulties after opening the second front, the western leaders sent the same message to Stalin in January 1945 : can't you hit harder?

We are not justified in regarding Churchill's letters as a warning. Churchill wrote his first long letter to Stalin on 25 June 1940 before the Barbarossa plan even existed. Churchill's letters are founded on sober calculation rather than on knowledge of German plans. He was simply drawing Stalin's attention to the situation in Europe: Britain has problems with Hitler today, and the Soviet Union will surely have them tomorrow. Churchill was calling on Stalin to come into the war on the side of Britain.

Sir Basil Liddell-Hart, the prominent British military historian, made a brilliant analysis of the strategic situation of that time as seen from Hitler's standpoint. According to General Jodl, to whom Liddell-Hart refers, Hitler repeatedly told his generals that Britain's only hope was a Soviet invasion of Europe. (B. H. Liddell-Hart, *History of the Second World War*, Pan, London 1978, p. 151) Churchill himself wrote on 22 April 1941 that 'the Soviet government knows full well . . . that we stand in need of its help'. (L. Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, p. 611) What help was Churchill expecting from Stalin, and how could Stalin give it, except by striking at Germany?

Stalin had sufficient grounds for not trusting Churchill. But even Stalin must have understood that had Britain fallen, he would have been left to face Germany alone. In his reply to Churchill's 25 June message, he says that 'the policy of the Soviet Union is to avoid war with Germany. But Germany might attack the Soviet Union in spring of 1941, if Britain has lost the war by then.' (R. Goralski, *World War II Almanac: 1931-1945*, Hamish Hamilton, London, p. 24)

It transpires from Stalin's answer that he intended to live in peace while patiently waiting for Britain to fall, and if he had been left alone face to face with Hitler, to wait for Germany to invade. Ah, how stupid Stalin was, some historians say indignantly. But let us not share their indignation. That message was addressed not to Churchill, but to Hitler! On 13 July 1940, Molotov was ordered by Stalin to hand over to Count von der Schulenburg, the German ambassador, the written record of Stalin's conversation with Sir Stafford Cripps, the British Ambassador. Was it not a strange thing to do, to have negotiations with Churchill through Sir Stafford Cripps, and then secretly pass the minutes of these negotiations to Hitler through his ambassador von der Schulenburg?

But Stalin did not pass the original memorandum to Hitler, only a carefully edited copy in which a mass of unnecessary detail was retained, but key sentences were completely altered. When the diplomatic veneer is stripped away, this is what the document was telling Hitler:

'Adolf, fight, and don't worry about your rear. Advance and don't look back, you have behind you your good friend Josef Stalin who only wants peace and who will never attack you under any circumstances.

'There have been negotiations here in Moscow with the British Ambassador. Don't worry, these negotiations are not directed against you. You see, I'm even sending you the secret minutes of my talks with Cripps. And I've sent Churchill to hell!' (In fact he had not).

Could the sweet siren songs from the Kremlin be believed? Many historians do believe them. But Hitler did not, and after thinking long and hard about the 'copy' of Stalin's conversation with Cripps, he issued the order on 21 July 1940 that a start should be made on the plan for Operation Barbarossa. In other words, Hitler decided to fight on two fronts. This decision seems inexplicable to many people. Many German generals and field-marshal did not understand it either, and they declined to approve such a truly suicidal decision. But Hitler had no choice.

He had gone increasingly further west, north and south, while Stalin stood back with his axe singing sweet songs of peace.

Hitler's one irremediable mistake was made, not on 21 July 1940, but on 19 August 1939. Once he had agreed to the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Hitler was faced with an inevitable war against the West, while the 'neutral' Stalin stood behind him. From that moment onwards, Hitler had two fronts. His decision to set up Operation Barbarossa in the east without waiting for victory in the west was not a fatal error, but only an attempt to put right the fatal error he had already made. But by then it was too late. The war already had two fronts, and it was already impossible to win it. Even the capture of Moscow would not have solved Hitler's problem; beyond Moscow there still lay another 10,000 kilometres of boundless territory, vast centres of industrial power, inexhaustible natural and human resources. It is always easy to begin a war with Russia, but not so easy to finish it. It was certainly easy for Hitler to fight in the European part of the Soviet Union; the territory is limited, there are many good roads, and the winters are mild. Was Hitler ready to fight in Siberia in the unrestricted limitless expanse, where there were no roads and where the brutality of the frost is close to the brutality of Stalin's regime?

Stalin knew that war on two fronts would be suicide for Hitler. Stalin calculated that Hitler would not commit suicide, and that he would not begin a war in the east without having first ended the war in the west. Stalin was patiently waiting for the German tank corps to land in Britain. He was not alone in looking upon the brilliant airborne assault on Crete as a final rehearsal for landing in Britain. At the same time Stalin did everything possible to convince Hitler of his peaceableness. That was why Soviet anti-aircraft guns were not firing on German aircraft, while Soviet newspapers and TASS proclaimed that there would be no war between the Soviet Union and Germany.

Had Stalin succeeded in convincing Hitler that the Soviet Union was a neutral country, then the German tank corps without any doubt would have landed on the British Isles. And then a truly unprecedented situation would have arisen. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Yugoslavia, France, Greece and Albania no longer had armies, governments, parliaments or political parties.

Millions of people had been driven into Nazi concentration camps and the whole of Europe was awaiting its liberation. All that remained on the European continent was the regiment of Hitler's personal guards, the guards of the Nazi concentration camps, German rear units, military schools and . . . five Soviet airborne assault corps, tens of thousands of fast tanks built specially for moving along motorways; tens of thousands of aircraft; pilots who had not been trained for fighting in the air, but who had been taught how to make air strikes on ground targets; divisions and whole armies of the NKVD; armies made up of prisoners from the Soviet labour camps; extra-high-power formations of the Glider Air Force to make rapid landings on enemy territory; mountain divisions trained to make swift thrusts into the mountain passes over which flowed oil, the life- blood of war.

Has anyone in history ever been in such a favourable position to 'liberate' Europe? And this situation did not come about by itself. Stalin, working long, persistently and in sustained fashion, had made a subtle mosaic from the smallest of fragments. It was Stalin who helped to bring Hitler to power, and made Hitler, in Stalin's phrase, a real icebreaker for the revolution. It was Stalin who encouraged the icebreaker to move into Europe. It was Stalin who demanded of the French and other communists that they should not prevent the icebreaker from breaking up Europe. It was Stalin who supplied the icebreaker with everything it needed for its victorious advance. It was Stalin who closed his eyes to all the crimes being committed by the Nazis and rejoiced in the pages of *Pravda* 'when the world was shaken to its foundations, when powers perished and greatness fell'.

But Hitler guessed Stalin's design. That was why World War II ended catastrophically for Stalin. He only got half of Europe, and some places here and there in Asia.

One final question. If Churchill did not warn Stalin that an invasion was being prepared, why do the communists hold on so tenaciously to the legend that he did? To show to the Soviet people that Churchill was a good man? Or to prove that the Western leaders were to be trusted? It was not, of course, for either purpose.

The communists need the legend of Churchill's warnings to justify their own preparations for war. The 'warnings' bolster the orthodox view that the 'big plan' for which such elaborate preparations had been made

was simply intended to forestall German aggression. 'We knew that Hitler was going to attack,' they say. 'It was Churchill who warned us . . .'

CHAPTER 30

Why Stalin Did Not Trust Richard Sorge

Stalin prepared himself very seriously for war. He showed particular concern for Soviet military intelligence which is known today as the GRU. It is sufficient to read through the list of all the GRU chiefs since the institution was set up prior to 1940 to appreciate Stalin's touching concern for his valiant intelligence officers:

Aralov	— arrested, spent several years under investigation, in which 'measures of physical coercion' were used
Stigga	— liquidated
Nikonov	— liquidated
Berzin	— liquidated
Unshlikht	— liquidated
Uritsky	— liquidated
Yezhov	— liquidated
Proskurov	— liquidated

It goes without saying that when the military intelligence chiefs were liquidated, their first deputies, their deputies, advisers and directors of their services boards and departments were liquidated as well. And when the heads of departments were liquidated, a shadow invariably fell over the executive officers and agents whom they were directing. The liquidation of the heads of military intelligence, therefore, meant the liquidation of the entire military intelligence.

It is said that this regular blood-letting had disastrous consequences for the intelligence service. This was not the case. Before, during and after World War II, the GRU was, and remains, the most powerful and effective intelligence service in the world. The GRU produces less secret information than its great opponent and competitor, the Ch.K. or KGB (the Soviet secret police), but the quality of its information is considerably

higher. The constant purging in no way weakened the power of Soviet military intelligence. On the contrary, as each generation succeeded its predecessor, it became more aggressive. This succession of generations is like the way in which a shark renews its teeth. The new teeth appear in complete rows, forcing out the old ones, while more and more rows of new teeth can already be seen behind them. The bigger the creature grows, the more teeth it has; the more often they are replaced, the longer and sharper they become.

Intelligence officers who were by Soviet standards innocent, frequently, indeed very frequently, perished in the rapid succession of generations. Strangely, however, the Soviet shark never ended up toothless because of it. Hitler exterminated a large number of ardent Nazis who belonged to the SA, one of the great mass Nazi organizations, without weakening his regime in any way.

The difference between Hitler and Stalin was that Stalin took his preparations for war very seriously. Stalin arranged nights of the long knives not just against his own communist storm-troopers, but against generals, marshals, designers and intelligence officers. Stalin believed that it was very important to accept briefcases crammed full of documents from his intelligence service. But he considered it even more important not to accept a briefcase from his intelligence service with a bomb in it. His thinking on this proceeded not only from considerations of his own personal safety, but from considerations of the state as well. The stability of the leadership in critical situations is one of the most vital factors in the preparations which any state makes for war.

Nobody ever pushed a bomb under Stalin's desk at a critical moment, and it was not just chance that this never happened. Through his sustained, single-minded terror against the GRU, Stalin not only obtained secret intelligence of high quality, but also guaranteed the supreme leadership of the country against 'unexpected events of all kinds' at times of crisis.

Richard Sorge was a spy from the row of teeth which Stalin, as a precaution, ordered to be pulled out on 29 July 1938. He was stationed in Tokyo, where he worked as a journalist under the alias 'Ramsay'. Soviet military intelligence was not so stupid as to publish Sorge's most interesting reports. But even the few which have been published lead us into an impasse:

January 1940: I am grateful for your greetings and wishes about my leave. If I go on leave however it will immediately reduce the information.

May 1940: It goes without saying that we are postponing the date of our return home because of the present military situation. May we assure you once again that this is not the time to raise this question.

October 1940: May I count on coming home after the end of the war?

This is a very odd correspondence. Every intelligence officer knows that he will be allowed to return home after a war. Yet Sorge puts the question again and again, listing the numerous services he has rendered to the Soviet regime. Every transmission in unbroken code from his clandestine radio station put Sorge's entire espionage organization at risk. Had his radio station—intended for agent-running and top-secret codes — really been created to enable Sorge to ask such questions?

A multitude of books and articles have been written about Sorge in the Soviet Union. Some of them ring with strange praise of him. He was such a great intelligence officer, such a true communist that he even spent his own money, which he had earned in his difficult work as a journalist, on his illegal work. What nonsense! Were the labour-camp prisoners in Kolyma no longer digging up gold? Had the GRU become so impoverished that Sorge had to dip into his own pocket? The weekly magazine *Ogonek* (No. 17, 1965), published an interesting report that Sorge was holding very important documents, but was unable to send them to the centre, because the centre had not sent a courier. *Ogonek* did not say why the centre had not sent a courier, adding another puzzling question to the case.

But the explanation was quite simple. While all this was going on, Yan Berzin, the brilliant chief of Soviet military intelligence who had recruited Richard Sorge, was liquidated after suffering appalling torture. Solomon Uritsky, another GRU chief who had personally given Sorge his instructions, was also liquidated. Gorev, the Soviet illegal resident who had fixed Sorge's passage from Germany, was in jail. (*Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, 8 October 1964) Aina Kuusinen, a secret collaborator of Sorge's who was married to a deputy head of the GRU who was both the President of the Finnish Democratic Republic and future member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU, was also in jail. Ekaterina Maksimova, Sorge's wife, had been arrested,

admitted having links with enemies, and was liquidated. Karl Ramm, the illegal GRU resident in Shanghai and former deputy of Sorge's, was summoned back to Moscow 'on leave' and liquidated.

Then Sorge received the order to come back on leave. Soviet sources do not conceal the fact that 'Sorge refused to travel to the Soviet Union.' A good deal of material on this subject was published during the Khrushchev era, including the frank admission that 'Undoubtedly Sorge guessed what was awaiting him in Moscow.'

Not wishing to return to a certain death, Sorge continued to work for the communists, but now no longer in the role of a secret collaborator (*seksot* for short), but rather as an amateur informer, for his own satisfaction. Sorge had calculated carefully; I shan't go now, but after the war they will understand that I spoke only the truth. They can pardon, and appreciate. That was why he was paying agents out of his own pocket, and why there were no couriers speeding towards him. The centre did not lose contact with him until the end. It accepted his telegrams, but apparently only to reply 'Come home, come home, come home.' To which Ramsay replied 'Too busy, too busy, too busy . . .'

Stalin, therefore, did not trust Richard Sorge because he was a defector, with at least two capital sentences hanging over his head. One was due to his co-workers, who had denounced him in 1938 and put his name on the 'general list'. The other was added later for malicious defection. Comrade Sorge himself did not greatly trust Comrade Stalin, which is why he would not go back. How could Comrade Stalin trust someone who did not trust him?

Someone has made up the legend that Richard Sorge supposedly submitted highly important information about the German invasion to the GRU, but nobody believed him. Sorge was a very able intelligence officer, but he told Moscow nothing of significance about the German invasion. What is more, he fell victim to disinformation and fed the GRU with false reports. On 11 April 1941, he telegraphed Moscow that: 'The representative of the [German] General Staff in Tokyo has stated that war against the Soviet Union will begin immediately after the war in Europe ends.'

Hitler knew that it had already become impossible to conceal his preparations to invade the Soviet Union. He therefore said in secret, in a way that all should hear, 'Yes, I want to attack Stalin . . . after I have finished the war in the west.' We already know that exactly one month later, Stalin would do the same thing in his 'secret' speech when he said, 'Yes, I want to attack Hitler ... in 1942.'

If Sorge's telegram of 11 April (and other telegrams like it) were to be believed, there was no need to worry. The war in the west would continue, alternately dying down and flaring up with new force. But when the end of that war came, it would be obvious. It would then be possible to concentrate all the efforts of the German war machine on the east. In other words, said Sorge, Hitler intended to fight on one front only.

The GRU did not need Sorge to tell them this. After making a profound study of all the economic, political and military aspects of the situation, the GRU drew two conclusions: firstly, that Germany could not win a war on two fronts; and secondly, that Hitler would not begin a war in the east without first finishing the war in the west. The first conclusion proved correct. The second did not. Sometimes a war is started without any prospects of winning it.

Even before Sorge's 'warnings', Lieutenant-General Filip Ivanovich Golikov, the new head of the GRU, submitted a detailed report to Stalin on 20 March 1941, which concluded that 'the earliest possible date on which operations against the USSR may begin is the moment following victory over England or after an honourable peace for Germany has been concluded with her'.

But Stalin knew this simple truth without Golikov having to tell him. That is why Stalin replied to Churchill's letter of 25 June 1940 that Hitler might begin a war against the Soviet Union in 1941, *on condition* that Britain had ceased to resist by that time.

But Hitler, whom Stalin had driven into a strategic impasse with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, suddenly realized that he had nothing to lose and that inevitably Germany had two fronts. He began to fight on two fronts. Neither Stalin nor Golikov expected this. It was a suicidal decision, but Hitler had no choice. Stalin simply could not understand that having found himself in a strategic impasse, Hitler would take such a suicidal step. General Golikov, the head of the GRU, had not contemplated this either. Sorge simply confirmed this view with the false information in his telegrams.

Later, on 15 June, Sorge correctly named the date of the German invasion as 22 June. But which Richard Sorge was to be believed? The one who said that Hitler would not fight on two fronts, or the one who said he would? Sorge's two reports cancel each other out. That apart, Sorge's reports were only reports. The GRU, quite rightly, does not believe any reports; what it requires is reports with proof.

Sorge was a great intelligence officer, and fully deserved his posthumously-awarded title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Sorge's greatness, however, was brought to bear not on Germany, but on Japan. S. Uritsky, when still head of the GRU, personally gave Sorge his mission: 'the point of your work in Tokyo is to deflect the possibility of a war between Japan and the USSR. Your main target is the Germany embassy.' (*Ogonek*, 1965, No. 14, p. 23) The German embassy was only a cover, to be used by Sorge to fulfil his main mission. His brief was not to warn about preparations for German invasion, but to deflect Japanese aggression onto another course.

Sorge is widely known to have told Stalin in autumn 1941 that Japan would not come into the war against the Soviet Union. Stalin used this extremely important information to withdraw dozens of Soviet divisions from the Far Eastern frontiers and to throw them into the fighting near Moscow, thereby changing the strategic situation in his favour.

What is less well known is the reason why Stalin believed Sorge on this occasion: he believed him because Sorge gave him proof. Soviet historians prefer to pass over this proof in silence, and that is understandable. If Sorge said that Japan would not move against the Soviet Union, he could only prove it by indicating another enemy, against whom Japan was in fact preparing a surprise attack.

As he followed his GRU brief, Sorge did not just forecast events. He directed them on a number of occasions. In August 1951 the United States Congress was examining the Sorge affair. In the course of the hearings it was proved beyond all shadow of doubt that, through the person of Ramsay, its illegal resident in Tokyo, Soviet Military Intelligence did a vast amount to ensure that Japan began an aggressive war in the Pacific, and that this aggression was directed against the United States. (*Hearings on American Aspects of the Richard*

Sorge Spy Case, House of Representatives 82nd Congress, First Session, 19, 22 and 23 August, Washington 1951)

Intelligence is the most thankless work in the world. It is the ones who fail who become famous, the ones who get hanged - like Sorge, for example. Stalin also had military intelligence officers whose achievements were truly outstanding; but, precisely because they were so successful, they remain entirely unknown to us. One Soviet intelligence officer had access to some of Hitler's real secrets. According to Marshal of the Soviet Union A. A. Gretchko, 'eleven days after Hitler accepted the final plan for the war against the Soviet Union (18 December 1940), this fact and the basic details of the decision taken by the German High Command became known to our intelligence organs'. (*VIZH* 1966, No. 6, p. 8)

We shall probably never learn the name of the great intelligence officer who performed this feat. It cannot be excluded that it was the same GRU resident who obtained the plan for Operation Citadel in 1943. But that is only my suggestion.

In December 1940, Lieutenant-General F. I. Golikov, the GRU chief, reported to Stalin that he had confirmed reports which indicated that Hitler had decided to fight on two fronts, that is, to attack the Soviet Union without waiting for the war in the west to end.

This highly important document was discussed in Stalin's presence in early January in a very restricted circle in the Soviet High Command. Stalin did not believe it, saying that any document could be forged. Stalin demanded of Golikov that he organize Soviet military intelligence in such a way that it would know at any moment whether Hitler was really preparing for war or just bluffing. Golikov reported that he had already done this. The GRU was attentively following a whole range of aspects of German military preparations, and from these the GRU would accurately identify the moment when preparations for invasion would begin. Stalin asked Golikov to explain how he could know this. Golikov answered that he could only tell Stalin personally and not anyone else. Subsequently, Golikov regularly reported to Stalin personally, and each time he told him that the preparations for invasion had not yet begun.

At the Politburo meeting held on 21 June 1941, Golikov reported on a massive concentration of German troops on the Soviet border, on enormous reserves of ammunition, on the regrouping of the German Air Force, on German deserters, and about other matters. Golikov knew the numbers of nearly all the German divisions, the names of their commanders, and where they were stationed. He knew many important secrets, including the name of Operation Barbarossa and the time of its inception. After giving his report, however, Golikov said that preparations for invasion had not yet begun, and without these preparations it was not possible for Germany to begin the war. In the course of the meeting Golikov was asked whether he could guarantee what he was saying. Golikov replied that he would answer for his information with his head, and if he were mistaken, then the Politburo would have the right to do to him what had been done to all his predecessors.

Some ten to twelve hours after he had said this, Operation Barbarossa began. What did Stalin do to Golikov? Do not fear, it was nothing bad. On 8 July Stalin entrusted Golikov with a trip to Britain and the United States, and briefed him personally. The visits were a success, and Golikov was then put in command of armies and fronts. In 1943 Stalin appointed him to the vitally important post of deputy to the People's Commissar for Defence, that is deputy to Stalin himself, to deal with cadre matters. Stalin allowed only his most trusted men to handle the delicate task of selecting and placing cadres. Beria, for instance, was never allowed to do this.

Golikov continued to rise in rank after Stalin died, and eventually became a Marshal of the Soviet Union. It is understandable that he should not say one word in his memoirs about how he covered German preparations for war, how he remained alive, or why he had such swift advancement after Operation Barbarossa.

If one recalls what happened to all his predecessors, to whom nothing resembling a German invasion ever happened, and compares their fate with what happened to Golikov, then one's bewilderment knows no bounds. The mystery of Golikov had been worrying me personally for a long time when I found the answer I was seeking in the Academy of the GRU. Later, when I was working in the central organization of the GRU, I found confirmation of this answer.

Golikov used to report to Stalin that Hitler was not preparing for war against the Soviet Union. It turned out that Golikov was reporting the truth to Stalin, for in reality Hitler was not making such preparations. Golikov knew that Stalin did not trust documents. Golikov did not trust them himself. He therefore looked for some

other indicators which would unerringly signal the moment when Hitler began his preparations for war with the Soviet Union. All the GRU residents in Europe were ordered to infiltrate organizations directly or indirectly connected with sheep farming. Over a period of months, intelligence was gathered and carefully processed on the numbers of sheep in Europe, on the main sheep-breeding centres and slaughterhouses. Golikov was informed twice a day about mutton prices in Europe.

In addition Soviet intelligence began to hunt for dirty cloths and oil-stained pieces of paper left behind by soldiers cleaning their weapons. There were many German troops in Europe. The troops were stationed in field conditions. Each soldier cleaned his weapon at least once a day. Cloths and paper which have been used for weapon cleaning are usually either burned or buried, but of course this rule was not always obeyed. The GRU had ample opportunity to collect an enormous quantity of dirty cloths.

Large amounts of these cloths were sent across the frontier, wrapped around various iron implements, so as not to arouse suspicion. Should any complications have arisen, the police would concentrate their attention on the inoffensive iron object, but not on the dirty cloth in which it was wrapped. In addition, considerably larger amounts than usual of kerosene lamps, gas stoves, primus stoves, lamps and lighters were sent across the border by both legal and illegal means. All this was analysed by hundreds of Soviet experts, and the results reported immediately to Golikov. He immediately informed Stalin that Hitler had not yet begun his preparations to invade the Soviet Union, so there was no need to pay heed to every build-up of German troops or German General Staff documents.

Golikov had good grounds for believing that very serious preparation was required for a war against the Soviet Union. One of the vital things which Germany would need if it were to be ready to fight such a war was sheepskin coats; no less than six million of them. As soon as Hitler decided to attack the Soviet Union, the General Staff would have to order industry to begin producing millions of sheepskin coats. This would be reflected immediately on the European markets. In spite of the war, mutton prices would fall because of the simultaneous slaughter of millions of animals, while sheepskin prices rise sharply.

Golikov also calculated that, if the German Army was going to fight in the Soviet Union, it would have to use a new type of lubricating oil for its weaponry. The German oil usually used on weapons would congeal in the frost, component parts would freeze together and the weapons would not work. Golikov waited for the German Army to change the type of oil it used in weapon-cleaning. Soviet expertise in dirty cloths showed that the

German Army was still using its usual oil, and there were no signs of a change over to a new type. Soviet experts also watched motor fuel. In heavy frost the normal German fuel broke down into incombustible particles. Golikov knew that if Hitler decided to open a second front, he would have to order the mass production of a fuel which would not disintegrate in heavy frost. It was samples of German liquid fuel which Soviet intelligence was sending over the border in lighters and lamps.

The GRU had many other ploys like these which would have served as warning signals. They proved useless for the simple reason that Hitler set Operation Barbarossa in motion without making any preparations at all. Why Hitler acted like this will surely remain a mystery. The German Army was built for war in western Europe, but Hitler did nothing to prepare his army for war in Russia.

Stalin therefore had no reason to punish Golikov, who had done everything humanly possible to discover German preparations for an invasion. He told Stalin that no preparations were taking place, and this was the simple truth. There had only been a great build-up of German troops. Golikov gave instructions that not all German divisions should be targets of attention, but only those which were ready to invade; those divisions, that is, which each had 15,000 sheepskin coats in its storage depots. There were simply no such divisions ready for war throughout the entire Wehrmacht. Golikov could hardly be blamed for not seeing any preparations for invasion when no serious preparations existed.

CHAPTER 31

How Hitler Frustrated Stalin's War

*We have been fully prepared for an aggressive war.
It was not our fault that we were not the ones to
carry out the aggression.*

Major-General P. GRIGORENKO
(*Memoirs: 'Dentinez'*, New York 1981,
P. 138)

On 17 June 1945, a group of Soviet military investigators were interrogating some senior Nazi military leaders. In the course of his interrogation, Field-Marshal Keitel maintained that

all the preparatory measures we took before spring 1941 were defensive measures against the contingency of a possible attack by the Red Army. Thus the entire war in the East, to a known degree, may be termed a preventive war . . . We decided ...to forestall an attack by Soviet Russia and to destroy its armed forces with a surprise attack. By spring 1941, I had formed the definite opinion that the heavy buildup of Russian troops, and their attack on Germany which would follow, would place us, in both economic and strategic terms, in an exceptionally critical situation . . . Our attack was the immediate consequence of this threat . . .

Colonel-General Alfred Jodl, the main author of the German military plans, adopted the same stance. The Soviet investigators did their best to force Keitel and Jodl out of their postures, but did not succeed. Keitel and Jodl did not change their testimony and, along with the principal war criminals, were sentenced to be hanged by the international tribunal at Nuremberg. One of the main accusations against them was 'the unleashing of an unprovoked aggressive war' against the Soviet Union.

Twenty years went by and new evidence appeared. Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union N. G. Kuznetsov was, in 1941, an admiral, People's Commissar for the Navy, member of the Central Committee of the Party, member of Stavka from the time it was set up. In the 19603, he shed some startling new light on the matter:

For me there is one thing beyond all argument - J. V. Stalin not only did not exclude the possibility of war with Hitler's Germany, on the contrary, he considered such a war . . . inevitable . . . J. V. Stalin made preparations for war . . . wide and varied preparations - beginning on dates . . . which he himself had selected. Hitler upset his calculations. (*Nakunune*, Moscow Voenizdat 1966, p. 321)

The admiral is telling us quite clearly and openly that Stalin considered war inevitable and prepared himself seriously to enter it at a time of his own choosing. In other words, Stalin was preparing to strike the first blow, that is to commit aggression against Germany; but Hitler dealt a preventive blow first and thereby frustrated all Stalin's plans.

Admiral Kuznetsov is a witness of the highest rank. In 1941, he was even more highly placed in the Soviet military-political hierarchy than Zhukov. Kuznetsov was a People's Commissar; Zhukov was a deputy People's Commissar. Kuznetsov was a member of the Central Committee; Zhukov was only a candidate member. Not one of those who have written their memoirs was as highly placed as Kuznetsov in 1941, and no one was closer to Stalin than he.

What Kuznetsov says after the war, incidentally, is in full accord with what he said before the war, for instance at the 18th Party Congress in 1939. This was the Congress which marked out a new path: to reduce the terror inside the country and to transfer it to the Soviet Union's neighbours. At this Congress, Kuznetsov's speech was perhaps the most aggressive. It was for this speech that Kuznetsov was made a member of the Central Committee at the end of the Congress, passing over the candidate-member level, and given the post of People's Commissar.

Everything which Kuznetsov said openly had been said many years before by Stalin in his secret speeches. Everything which Kuznetsov said has been borne out by what the Red Army and Fleet actually did. Finally,

Admiral Kuznetsov has to be believed in this case, because his book has been read by all friends and enemies alike; it has been read by political and military leaders in the Soviet Union; it has been read by marshals, diplomats, historians, generals and admirals; it has been read by paid friends of the Soviet Union abroad, and nobody has ever tried to deny Kuznetsov's words.

Let us compare Keitel's words with those of Kuznetsov. Field-Marshal Keitel said that Germany was not preparing an aggression against the Soviet Union; it was the Soviet Union which was preparing the aggression. Germany was simply using a preventive attack to defend itself from an unavoidable aggression. Kuznetsov says the same thing — yes, the Soviet Union was preparing for war and would inevitably have entered into it, but Hitler disrupted these plans with his attack. What I cannot understand is why Keitel was hanged, and Kuznetsov was not.

Soviet marshals and generals do not hide their intentions. General S. P. Ivanov, Chief of the General Staff Academy of the Armed Forces of the USSR, along with a group of leading Soviet historians, wrote a scientific paper entitled *The Initial Period of War (Nachal'nyi Period Voyny*, Moscow Voenizdat 1974), in which he not only admits that Hitler launched a preventive attack, but also puts a time to it: 'the Nazi command succeeded in forestalling our troops literally in the last two weeks before the war began', (p. 212)

Another open declaration of Soviet intentions in 1941 can be found in the *Military Historical Journal (VIZH* 1984, No. 4) The journal is the official publication of the Soviet Ministry of Defence, and cannot be published without the stamp of the Minister of Defence and the Chief of the General Staff. (At the time these were, respectively, Marshals of the Soviet Union S. Sokolov and S. Akhromeev). The *Military Historical Journal* explained why such great stockpiled reserves of ammunition, liquid fuel and provisions were built up so close to the frontier. The explanation was simple: they were for offensive operations, (p. 34) It is stated quite openly on the same page that the German attack disrupted the Soviet plans.

Had the Red Army been preparing for defence or even a counter-attack, it would have been no simple matter to disrupt its plans. Quite the contrary, for a German invasion would have served as a signal to Soviet troops to act according to plans which had already been drawn up. Only if the Red Army had intended to

attack could the German invasion have disrupted its plans. Soviet troops would then be compelled to defend themselves, that is to improvise, and act in a situation which had not been envisaged.

On 6 June 1941, German intelligence received information that the Soviets intended to transfer their seat of government to Sverdlovsk. Only Hitler and those closest to him were informed about it. Dr Goebbels noted in his diary that he had received such a report, and spoke very unflatteringly about the Soviet government's intention to run away further to the east.

Only now, several decades later, can we evaluate the report on its merits. We now know that a *decoy command post* had been built in Sverdlovsk. It was only during the war that it turned out that it was not Sverdlovsk which was to be the emergency capital, but Kuibyshev. Even Kuibyshev, however, was not the whole truth, but only half of it. The institutions which were set up in Kuibyshev were those whose loss did not affect the stability of the country's top military and political leadership, such as the Supreme Soviet with 'President' Kalinin, unimportant people's commissariats, and embassies.

All the important bodies were located nearby, not in Kuibyshev itself, but in great underground tunnels hewn out of the Zhiguli rocks. Before the war the construction of this giant had been disguised by the building of the Kuibyshev hydro-electric power station. Thousands of labour-camp prisoners, thousands of tons of construction materials and building machinery were sent there and everybody knew why. It was to build the hydroelectric power station. After the war the entire gigantic edifice was moved higher upriver on the Volga, and the hydro-electric station arose on a new site. The original site had been selected in a place where a power station should not have been built but which was an eminently suitable place for an underground command post.

I found no mention in pre-war German archives of Kuibyshev as the emergency capital, or of the underground command post in Zhiguli. German intelligence only had information about the transfer of the Soviet government to a command post in Sverdlovsk. But a government cannot move to a command post which does not exist. Who was spreading these reports about the transfer to a fictitious command post? This could only have been done by the person who invented the bogus command post in the first place, that is the

Soviet government, or more exactly, the head of that government, Stalin. That bogus command post was created so that the enemy should find out about it one day. That day came, and German intelligence acquired the secret which had been specially manufactured for it.

If German intelligence obtained a false report about Soviet government intentions, it meant that the Soviet government itself must have been trying to conceal something at the time. It is not difficult to guess what. If the Soviet leaders were spreading false information about their intention to move eastwards, it meant without any doubt that they were going to do the opposite.

The subtlety was that, in addition to the powerful Zhiguli command post, whose location was difficult though not impossible to establish, there was another government command post. It was a railway train. In the event of war, this command post, under cover of several armoured trains of the NKVD and accompanied by three trains belonging to the People's Commissariat for Communications, could go at any time to any area where hostilities were in progress. This capability to move alongside an area where the main events of the war were taking place was reflected in the name of the train-the PGKP, or Main Forward Command Post. Several carefully hidden, camouflaged stations were built expressly for this command post. Government telegraph lines were led into these stations before the war, and all the trains had to do was to plug into them with their own communications equipment.

There is no need to explain that the mobile command post was intended for an offensive war; in a situation where the troops are rapidly pressing forward, the command, with its cumbersome paraphernalia of control and communications, must keep up with them. In a defensive war, on the other hand, it is simpler, more reliable and safer to exercise direction from an office in the Kremlin, from an underground station in the Moscow Metro, or even from the tunnels of Zhiguli.

Were we to gather up all available snippets of information and put them together, we should be able to conclude with a fair degree of certainty that a very high-calibre command post had been established, or must have been established nearer to Vilnius, on the Minsk-Vilnius main railway line. Several days after the German leaders received their 'secret' report about the Soviet government's transfer eastwards, the Soviet government began its secret move towards the Soviet western frontier near Minsk and Vilnius.

Every military man knows how a large headquarters is moved in exercises or in a combat situation. The operations branch selects the site for the future headquarters, the senior commander approves the site and then authorizes the move there. The forest where the headquarters will be located is cordoned off, in order to keep out unauthorized persons. Then sappers and signallers appear to build shelters and a communications system. Then the head of communications turns up and personally checks that the communications are functioning reliably. Finally, when that has been done, the headquarters itself arrives. All its officers have to do is to plug in their telephones and enciphering machines.

In 1941, the Red Army was functioning like a single well-oiled machine. Dozens of officers in charge of signals in rifle and mechanized corps appeared in the forests near the border. The secret deployment of the command posts of these corps followed in their wake. Immediately after this, the signals chiefs of the armies turned up in other forests. Their appearance was a sign that army headquarters would shortly arrive. Sure enough, the headquarters did indeed turn up. It was exactly on the day that the TASS report was published that the signals chiefs of the fronts appeared in secluded corners of these prohibited, well guarded woods. After the communications had been checked, the front headquarters secretly moved their columns to their new positions.

The moment then arrived for the most important signals chief of all to appear, 150 kilometres from the East Prussian frontier. I. T. Peresypkin, People's Commissar for Communications, secretly moved to Vilnius. Can we guess for whom Peresypkin was going to check communications there? People's Commissar Peresypkin has only one direct superior, and that is the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, Comrade J. V. Stalin himself.

The People's Commissar for Communications went to the East Prussian frontier in such a way that no one could know about it. He travelled in an ordinary train running to the regular timetable but with an additional special wagon, for Peresypkin and his deputy, coupled on to it. The journey of the People's Commissar for Communications was a total secret. He even received encoded messages from Moscow signed in his own name, so that the cipher clerks should believe that Peresypkin was still in Moscow.

Peresypkin's own account of his journey is revealing:

Literally on the eve of war, J. V. Stalin sent me to the Baltic republics. I somehow mentally linked this crucial mission with approaching military events. On the evening of 21 June 1941, I travelled to Vilnius along with a group of executives from the People's Commissariat for Communications. The war broke out while we were on the way . . . (*Svyazisty v Gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi*, Moscow Svyaz' 1972, p. 17)

On the morning of 22 June, while he was at the Orsha railway station, Peresypkin received a telegram from Moscow: IN CONNECTION WITH CHANGE IN SITUATION DO YOU NOT THINK IT NECESSARY TO RETURN MOSCOW? PERESYPKIN. (*Ibid*, pp. 32-33)

Peresypkin was travelling on a railway system which not only had been completely turned over to the military, but which had been ordered a few days before to place itself on a war footing and to be ready to work under conditions of war. (V. Anfilov, *Bessmertnyi Podvig*, 1971, p. 184) Having been ordered to take with him 'only what is necessary for life and battle', Peresypkin went to an area where troops were being secretly concentrated in vast numbers on the frontier, and where a government command post was being secretly set up. Travelling on Stalin's personal orders, Peresypkin knew that his journey 'was connected with approaching military events'.

But as soon as Hitler attacked, Peresypkin abandoned his secret railway wagon and rushed back to Moscow on a lorry which happened to come to hand. Had Hitler not attacked, then Comrade Peresypkin, People's Commissar for Communications, would have gone to the secret command post near Vilnius to co-ordinate the military, governmental and state communications systems during the war. The German attack constituted such a serious change in the situation that it caused the Soviet government to abandon many of its most important measures and compelled it to improvise, even to the extent of a People's Commissar having to return to Moscow on the back of the first lorry he could lay his hands on.

It had been planned that leading figures in the People's Commissariat for Defence, the NKVD, the People's Commissariat for State Control, and other important Soviet governing bodies, should move into the

western areas that same night, travelling along the same Moscow—Minsk railway line. The purpose of that journey was war. Among the leaders of the Stalinist empire who were getting ready that night to make the secret journey to the western borders were the People's Commissar for the Interior, candidate member of the Politburo and Commissar General for State Security, L. P. Beria; member of the Central Committee, People's Commissar for State Control, Grade I Army Commissar L. Z. Mekhlis; and candidate member of the Central Committee, People's Commissar for Defence, Marshal of the Soviet Union S. K. Timoshenko. It cannot be excluded that even Stalin was also preparing himself to make that secret journey westwards.

Mixed groups were then formed consisting of the most senior executives from those People's Commissariats which would be most important in wartime. Each of these groups was then allotted to a leader. By the morning of 21 June the formation of these operational groups was completed, and all their members knew that they were going to war.

Surprisingly, however, nobody, including the group leaders then sitting in the Kremlin, even suspected that a German invasion was then in preparation. Even more surprisingly, when reports that an invasion was under way came flooding in that evening, the top Soviet leaders refused to believe them. Then directives and shouts down the telephone poured out to the frontier from the Kremlin, from the People's Commissariat for Defence, and from the General Staff: 'Don't give in to provocation!'

If the Soviet leaders did not believe that a German invasion was possible, for what war were they preparing themselves? There can be only one answer. They were preparing themselves for a war which would begin *without the German invasion*.

The groups who were to accompany the leaders spent many weary hours waiting before being told at 6 o'clock in the morning of 22 June that their trains to the western frontier had been cancelled, since Hitler had started the war. If it had been the intention of the Soviet leaders to travel to the western borders to man the secret command posts in order to contain a German invasion, they would have hurried westwards as soon as they had received a signal that such an invasion had begun. Instead, they cancelled their trains which were to have taken them to war. They were ready to turn up on the frontier and direct a war, but one which began as part of a Soviet scenario, and not a German one. Hitler deprived them of this satisfaction.

On 21 June 1941, Dmitri Ortenberg was head of the organizational instructors department of the People's Commissariat for State Control. He himself described his job as 'dealing with military ideas - a sort of chief of staff. His account vividly evokes the events of that night:

Sometimes they would ask me, 'When did you leave for the war?'

'Twenty first of June.'

'What?!'

Yes, it was like this ... In the morning I was called into the People's Commissariat for Defence and told that a group of officials from the Commissariat headed by Marshal S. K. Timoshenko was leaving for Minsk. I was notified that I was to go with it. They suggested that I should go back home, put on military uniform and report back to the Commissariat . . . The waiting-room of the People's Commissar for Defence was choc-a-bloc full of military people, carrying files and maps, and obviously excited. They spoke in whispers. Timoshenko had gone to the Kremlin . . . The Commissar got back from the Kremlin about five o'clock in the morning of 22 June. He called me:

'The Germans have started the war. Our trip to Minsk has been cancelled.' (Ortenberg, *lyun' Dekabr' Sorok Pervogo*, Sovetsky Pisatel' 1984, pp. 5-6)

Nobody knows where the legend has come from that on 22 June 1941 Hitler began the war in the east, almost having to drag the Soviet Union into it by force. If we listen to those officers - from Kuznetzov to Ortenberg — who were right alongside the most important Soviet leaders in those minutes, hours and days, everything appears quite differently. On 22 June 1941 Hitler spoilt the war by carrying it on to the territory where it had been planned on 19 August 1939. Hitler did not allow the Soviet leaders to wage the war as they had intended. He forced them to improvise and do something for which they were unprepared: to defend their own territory.

CHAPTER 32

Did Stalin Have a War Plan?

Since Stalin never explained or expounded his points of view or his plans, many people thought that he did not have any. This was a typical error made by talkative intellectuals.

ROBERT CONQUEST
(The Great Terror)

'Strategic defence was an involuntary form of combat operations, it had not been planned beforehand.' That is what the Soviet military textbooks say. We do not need the textbooks, though, to tell us that in the summer of 1941, the Red Army's defensive operations were pure improvisation. Before the war, the Red Army had not been preparing itself for defence, nor had it ever held any exercises to practise defensive subjects. Soviet regulations contain not one word about defence on a strategic scale. Even in the purely theoretical field, problems of how to conduct defensive operations had never been worked out. What is more, neither the Soviet people nor its army had even been prepared psychologically for defence. People and army alike had been trained to do defensive things by using offensive methods: 'It is precisely the interests of defence which demand that the USSR should conduct extensive offensive operations on enemy territory, and this in no way contradicts the nature of a defensive war.' (*Pravda*, 19 August 1939)

In the first hours following the beginning of the German invasion, the Red Army kept on trying to go over to the offensive. Modern textbooks call what the Red Army was doing counter-strikes and counter-offensives. But it was pure improvisation. The problem of counter-strikes had never been worked through in any pre-war exercises, nor indeed had it ever been considered in theoretical terms: 'the subject of counter-offensive . . . had never been raised before the Great Motherland War'. (*I VOSS* (the official history of the 'Great Patriotic War'), Vol. i, p. 441)

Before the war, therefore, Soviet military staffs did not work out any plans for defence, nor did they work out any for a counter-offensive either. Yet they were working very hard on war plans. According to Marshal of the Soviet Union A. M. Vasi-levsky, in the year preceding the war, the officers and generals of the General Staff, the headquarters of the Military Districts and the naval fleets were working fifteen to seventeen hours a day, with no holidays or days off. Marshals Bagramyan and Sokol-ovsky, Generals Shtemenko, Kurasov, Malandin and many others say the same thing. General Anisov reportedly worked a 20-hour day, and the same was said of General Smorodinov.

General Zhukov became chief of the General Staff in February 1941. The General Staff in effect went on to a war footing from that moment. Zhukov himself worked assiduously and did not allow anyone else to slacken. In the summer of 1939, Zhukov, still holding his rank of *komkor*, had appeared in Khalkhin-Gol. He personally got to know the situation, quickly drew up plans, and began to carry them out with a vengeance. The slightest carelessness on the part of any subordinate meant immediate death. In the course of a few days Zhukov put seventeen officers on trial, demanding that they be sentenced to death. The tribunal immediately passed death sentences on all of them. Of the seventeen, one was saved on the intervention of the senior command, and the rest were shot. By February 1941, Zhukov had risen to great heights. His authority had increased several fold, and there was nobody who could save any poor unfortunate from his anger. General Staff veterans recall Zhukov's rule as the most terrible period in history, even more terrible than that of the Great Purge. At that time the General Staff, and all other staffs, were working under inhuman pressure.

So how could it have happened that the Red Army went into the war without plans? There is something else which cannot be understood. If the Red Army went to war without any plans, then why did Stalin not shoot Zhukov, and all those who should have been helping to make the plans, as soon as he learnt about it? That did not happen. On the contrary, those involved in making the Soviet plans, such as Vasilevsky, Sokolovsky, Vatutin, Malandin, Bagramyan, Shtemenko and Kurasov, who had all begun the war as major-generals or even colonels, ended it, if not as marshals, then at least as four-star generals. They all showed themselves to be brilliant strategists in the course of the war. They were all conscientious and even pedantic staff officers, who could not conceive of life without a plan. So how could it come about that the Red Army was compelled to improvise in the first months of the war? And why did Stalin not even reproach Zhukov and his planners, let alone shoot them?

When asked the straight question as to whether the Soviet command had any war plans, Zhukov replied categorically that it did have such plans. Then another question arises: if there were plans, why did the Red Army operate in an uncontrolled mass, without any plans at all? Zhukov has never answered this question. But here the answer suggests itself. If Soviet staffs were working very hard to make war plans, and these were neither defensive plans or plans for counter-offensive, then what kind of plans were they? Purely offensive plans.

Stalin did not shoot Zhukov and the other war-planners for one very simple reason. They had never been given the job of working out plans for a *defensive* war. Of what then could they be accused? Stalin gave the task of making plans of some other kind to Zhukov, Vasilevsky, Sokolovsky and other outstanding strategists. These were very good plans, but the moment the defensive war began they became unnecessary, just like the motorway tanks and the airborne assault corps.

Murder will out. The Soviet High Command took measures to destroy everything related to Soviet pre-war war plans. But these plans were held by all the fronts, all fleets, dozens of armies, more than one hundred corps, all warships, hundreds of divisions, and thousands of regiments and battalions. Something must have survived.

Research carried out by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR has shown that before the war the operational mission of the Soviet Black Sea Fleet was to undertake 'active hostilities against enemy ships and transport near the Bosphorus and in the approaches to enemy bases, and also to co-operate with land troops as they move along the Black Sea Coast'. (*Plot v VO V*, Moscow Nauka 1980, p. 117)

Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union Sergei Georgiyevich Gorshkov has said that, as well as the Black Sea Fleet, the Baltic and Arctic Fleets had been given purely defensive missions, but it was planned that these missions should be carried out by purely offensive methods. This was standard Soviet thinking before the war, and was expressed both at secret meetings in the Soviet command, and openly in *Pravda*: 'To wage a defensive war in no way means to stand on the borders of one's own country. The best form of defence is a swift advance until the enemy has been completely destroyed on his own territory.' (14 August 1939)

Operations of the Soviet fleets in the first minutes, hours and days of the war show sufficiently clearly that they did have plans, but that these were not plans for defence. On 22 June 1941, Soviet submarines of the Black Sea Fleet immediately put to sea and headed for the coasts of Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey. The same day submarines of the Baltic Fleet set sail for the coasts of Germany, with a mission to 'sink all enemy ships and vessels, in accordance with the rights of unrestricted submarine warfare'. (Order of Officer Commanding Baltic Fleet, 22 June 1941, *Plot v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine*, Moscow Nauka 1980, p. 279) The order did not even make an exception for hospital ships flying the Red Cross flag.

Beginning on 22 June, the air arm of the Black Sea Fleet carried out active combat operations in support of the Danube Naval Flotilla with the objective of opening a way upstream for the flotilla. On 25—26 June, surface warships of the Black Sea Fleet appeared off the Romanian port of Constanza and began an intensive artillery bombardment with the obvious intention of making a naval assault landing. At the same time the Danube Naval Flotilla began to carry out assault landing operations in the Danube Delta.

On 22 June, the garrison at the naval base at Hanko, on Finnish territory, instead of going over to a stonewall defence, initiated some sustained assault landing operations, and held nineteen Finnish islands for several days. On 25 June, in spite of the enormous losses which the Soviet Air Forces had sustained in the first hours of the war, 487 aircraft belonging to the Baltic and Arctic Fleets launched a surprise strike at Finnish airfields. Again in spite of these enormous losses, the Soviet air forces conducted themselves with exceptional valour and aggression. On 22 June the 1st Air Corps made a concentrated raid on military objectives in Königsberg.

None of this was improvisation. At 6.44 am on 22 June the Soviet Air Force was given the mission of operating in accordance with its plans, and for a few days it tried to do this. On 26 June, the 4th Air Corps began bombing raids on the Ploesti oilfields in Romania. During the few days' duration of these raids, oil output in Romania fell almost by half. Even in conditions where practically the whole of the Soviet Air Force had been destroyed on the ground, it still found sufficient strength to wreak great damage on the Romanian oilfields. In any other situation the Soviet Air Force would have been even more dangerous, and could have paralysed completely Germany's military, industrial and transport power with its operations against these oil-producing areas. Hitler understood this threat only too well, and considered that his only defence was to invade the Soviet Union.

On 22 June 1941, the 41st Rifle Division of the 6th Army's 6th Rifle Corps, without waiting for orders from above, crossed the state frontier near Raval-Russkaya. That same morning, and without waiting for orders from Moscow, Colonel-General F. I. Kuznetsov, officer commanding the North-West Front, ordered his troops to launch an attack towards Tilsit in East Prussia. This decision came as no surprise either to the headquarters staff of the North-West Front or to the officers commanding the armies and their staffs, for a version of the attack on Tilsit had been played out in headquarters exercises held a few days previously, 'and it was very familiar to the commanders of the formations and their headquarters'. (*Bor'ba za Sovetskuyu Pribaltiku*, Eesti Raamat, Tallinn 1980, Vol. i, p. 67) Colonel-General Kuznetsov simply put the pre-war plan into action. On the evening of the same day, the Soviet High Command, still unaware of General Kuznetsov's operations, ordered him to do precisely what he was doing already, that is, to attack Tilsit. The High Command gave the adjacent Western Front the task of launching an extra-high-power attack in the direction of the Polish town of Suwalki. And that came as no surprise either to General D. G. Pavlov, the officer commanding the Western Front. He himself knew what his front had to do, and had already given the order to advance on Suwalki long before the directive to do so arrived from Moscow. To advance was hardly the best thing to do, however, when the German Air Force had not been destroyed on the ground as planned, and the Soviet Western Front had itself lost 73 8 aircraft in the first hours of the war.

This operational mission had been spelt out to all Soviet commanders. Of course, the commanders at tactical level were not entitled to know what their tasks would be, but in the senior headquarters, these tasks had been exactly defined and formulated, placed under seal in secret envelopes, and kept in the safe in every headquarters, up to and including the level of battalion. For instance, the Reconnaissance Battalion of the 27th Rifle Division, concentrated close to the frontier near the town of Augustow, was preparing to carry out combat reconnaissance in the direction of Suwalki. (Arkhir MO SSSR, Archive 181, list 1631, item i, p. 128) The task of the Reconnaissance Battalion was to ensure the swift advance of the entire 27th Division from near Augustow to Suwalki. We know even more about this from overt sources than we do from pre-war archives. Enormous Soviet forces were concentrated near Augustow. That was the place where the Soviet frontier guards had been cutting the barbed wire on their frontier. That was the place where Lieutenant-General V. I. Kuznetsov, officer commanding the 3rd Army, and High Command Representative Lieutenant-General of Engineering Troops, D. Karbyshev, had spent long hours surveying German territory from frontier

posts. That was the very place where General Karbyshev had been training assault groups to cut off and neutralize the enemy's reinforced-concrete defensive installations.

Enormous numbers of Soviet troops had been assembled near Augustow long before the war. Right on the frontier and flowing parallel with it on Soviet territory is the Augustow Canal. If defence had been in preparation, the troops would have deployed behind the canal, using it as an impassable anti-tank ditch. But the Soviet troops crossed over to the western bank of the canal and deployed on the narrow stretch of terrain between the canal and the frontier, from which all barbed wire had been removed. At dawn on 22 June, thousands of Soviet soldiers were wiped out by sudden destructive fire. The troops, with the canal behind them, had nowhere to go to retreat.

Is not this perhaps just the usual Russian stupidity? Not at all. German troops had also been assembled in great numbers right up against the frontier, from which they also had removed their barbed wire. Had the Red Army attacked the day before, the losses on the other side would have been no less. Deployment of troops right on the frontier is exceptionally dangerous in the event of the enemy launching a surprise attack, but a deployment of that nature is eminently suitable for launching such an attack. Both armies were doing the same thing.

Soviet generals never concealed that it was offensive tasks which they had been given. General K. Galitsky, when speaking of the concentration of Soviet troops near Augustow, insists that the Soviet High Command did not believe that a German offensive was possible, while the Soviet troops were preparing to carry out an offensive operation. And since the Soviet fronts facing East Prussia and Poland were preparing only for an offensive, it follows that the fronts concentrated against Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia must also have long been preparing themselves only for an offensive as well. Major-General A. I. Mikhalev frankly admits that the Soviet High Command did not plan to use either the Southern or South-West Fronts for defensive or counter-offensive operations: 'it was intended that the strategic aims should be to have the troops of the fronts go over to decisive offensive'. (VIZH 1986, No. 5, P- 49)

Whether we believe the Soviet publications or not, the Red Army operations in the first days of the war are the best evidence of Soviet intentions. Zhukov, who co-ordinated the operations of the Southern and South-West Fronts aimed at Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, went on insisting on offensives until 30 June 1941, and demanded nothing but offensives from the officers commanding the fronts. It was only in

July that he and his colleagues came to the conclusion that the Red Army would no longer find it all that easy to advance.

It would be a mistake to underestimate the enormous strength and vast resources of Stalin's war machine. Despite its grievous losses, it had enough strength to withdraw and gather new strength to reach Berlin. How far would it have gone had it not sustained that massive blow on 22 June, if hundreds of aircraft and thousands of tanks had not been lost, had it been the Red Army and not the Wehrmacht which struck the first blow? Did the German Army have the territorial expanse behind it for withdrawal? Did it have the inexhaustible human resources, and the time, to restore its army after the first Soviet surprise attack? Did the German generals have any defensive plans?

CHAPTER 33

The War Which Never Was

*The Russian High Command knows its job better
than the High Command of any other army.*

General V. F. Von MELLENTIN
(*PanzerBattles*, London 1977, p. 353)

Hitler considered that a Soviet invasion was inevitable, but he did not expect it to happen in the very near future. German troops were diverted to activities of secondary importance, and the beginning of Operation Barbarossa was postponed. The operation finally began on 22 June 1941. Hitler himself clearly did not realize what a tremendous stroke of luck he had had. If Operation Barbarossa had been put off again, say from 22 June to 22 July, Hitler would have had to do away with himself considerably earlier than in 1945.

There are quite a few indications that the date for the beginning of the Soviet Operation Groza ('Thunderstorm') was fixed for 6 July 1941. Memoirs of Soviet marshals, generals and admirals, archival documents, the mathematical analysis of information or the movements of thousands of Soviet military railway trains all point to 10 July as the date on which the full concentration of the Second Strategic Echelon of the Red Army would be achieved on the Soviet western borders. Soviet military theory, however, lays down that the move over to a decisive offensive should not follow *but precede* the full concentration of troops. In that event, a number of those military trains belonging to the Second Strategic Echelon could have been off-loaded directly on enemy territory, for its troops to go directly into battle.

Zhukov and Stalin liked to deliver their surprise strikes on Sunday mornings, and 6 July 1941 was the last Sunday before the concentration of Soviet troops was complete. General Ivanov's statement directly points to this date: 'The German troops succeeded in forestalling us literally by two weeks.'

Let us suppose that Hitler had once again put back the date on which Barbarossa was to be launched by three to four weeks. Let us try to imagine what would have happened then. We do not need to exert our imagination. It is sufficient to look at the groupings of Soviet troops, at the unprecedented concentration of troops, at the airfields right up against the frontier, at the airborne assault corps and the motorway tanks, at the accumulation of submarines in frontier ports or at air assault gliders at forward airfields. It is sufficient for us to open Soviet pre-war military-regulation books, textbooks of Soviet military academies and schools, and the newspapers *Red Star* and *Pravda*.

The German troops are making intensive preparations for the invasion, which is fixed for . . . 22 *July* 1941. The concentration of troops is proceeding: military trains are off-loading at stations and halts; the forests near the borders are full of troops; at night groups of aircraft from distant airfields fly over the field aerodromes located right on the frontier; and there is feverish building of new roads and bridges. In a word, everything is just as it is in the Red Army. On the other side, the Red Army does not seem to be reacting at all to the German preparations.

At 3.30 am Moscow time on 6 July 1941, tens of thousands of Soviet guns shatter the silence, announcing to the world that the great 'liberation' campaign of the Red Army has begun. The Red Army's artillery is superior both in quality and quantity to any in the world. There are vast reserves of ammunition stockpiled on the Soviet frontiers. The rate of Soviet artillery fire swiftly increases until it becomes an infernal thunder roaring along the thousands of kilometres of front stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea. The first artillery salvo coincides to the minute with the arrival of a thousand Soviet aircraft flying across the state frontier. The German airfields have been extremely badly sited right on the border, and the German pilots do not have the time to get their aircraft airborne. There is a great number of aircraft assembled on the German airfields. They are standing wing-tip to wing-tip, and when one burns the fire spreads to the others like a fire in a matchbox.

Black columns of smoke rise above the airfields. These black columns act as beacons for Soviet aircraft, which come on in wave upon wave. Very few planes have been able to take off from the German airfields. German aircrews have been categorically forbidden to open fire on Soviet aircraft, but in spite of the ban imposed by the command, several pilots go into battle, shoot down Soviet aircraft, and when they have used up all their ammunition, they crash head-on into an enemy aircraft in a final suicidal attack. Losses in Soviet

aircraft are enormous, but the advantages of surprise remain. Any army, whether the Soviet, the German, or the Japanese, would have felt no happier under a similar surprise attack.

The artillery preparation grows in power. On the frontier, the Soviet regiments and battalions who have been raised by the alert are given vodka. The thunderous *ura*, the battle-cry of the troops, rolls through the frontier forests. The order of Comrade Stalin, the supreme commander-in-chief, is being read to the troops: 'The hour of reckoning has come! Soviet intelligence has exposed Hitler's perfidy and the time has come to settle accounts with him for all his evil deeds and crimes! Glorious warriors, the world is looking to you and awaits liberation!'

Infringing all established standards and prohibitions, the soldiers are told the numbers of Soviet troops, tanks, artillery, aircraft, and submarines which will take part in the liberation campaign. The rolling *ura* again rumbles out across the wooded glades and forest cuttings. Endless columns of tanks darken the horizon with clouds of dust as they move along roads through field and forest on their way to the frontier. 'Don't spare your fire, you deaf-eared lot!' the tank crews shout through clenched teeth at the deafened artillery troops.

The rumble of artillery fire grows, reaches a critical level, then suddenly stops. Then ringing silence oppresses the ears, and immediately the fields fill with masses of tanks and infantry, the

clank of armour and the fierce hoarse roar of the Soviet troops. The powdery smoke and the poisonous fumes from the tank diesel engines mix with the delicate smell of field flowers, while overhead wave upon wave of Soviet aircraft fly westwards. The artillery, having fallen silent for a minute, restarts, as though unwillingly, its powerful conversation. The artillery goes over from preparation to accompanying support. The batteries have opened up again, concentrating their fire on distant targets. Slowly but inexorably, the firing is stepped up again, and more and more artillery regiments join the battle.

Avoiding becoming involved in protracted battles with scattered enemy groups, the Soviet troops drive forward. The frontier bridges in Brest-Litovsk have been captured by Colonel Starinov's saboteurs. The Soviet saboteurs are astonished that the German bridges have not even been mined. How can one possibly explain such a scandalous degree of unreadiness for war?

The suddenness of the attack has a stunning effect, bringing a whole chain of catastrophes in its wake, each one of which, in its turn, brings on others. The destruction of the air force on the ground renders the

troops vulnerable from the air, and since they have neither trenches nor ditches in the frontier area, they are compelled to withdraw. Withdrawal means that thousands of tons of ammunition and fuel are abandoned at the border. Withdrawal means that airfields are left behind, and the enemy immediately destroys the remaining aircraft there. Withdrawal without ammunition and fuel means inescapable destruction. Withdrawal means that the command has lost control. The command does not know what is happening with the troops and is therefore unable to take any expedient decisions, while the troops are given no orders at all, or they are given orders which are completely out of keeping with the situation which has come about.

At the same time, Soviet saboteurs, who crossed the frontiers with time in hand, are active everywhere on the lines of communication. They either cut the communication lines, or plug into them and transmit false signals and orders to the enemy troops. The enemy's operations become separate, unco-ordinated battles. The German commanders ask Berlin what they should do. It is a serious question, because the Wehrmacht has not prepared itself for defence. What do we do? Advance? Operate in accordance with the pre-war Barbarossa plan? Without an air force? Without air supremacy?

The 3rd Soviet Army delivers a surprise strike at Suwalki. The 8th Army from the Baltic Military District goes to meet it. From the very beginning there are blood-letting engagements with great losses in Soviet troops. But they have one advantage: the Soviet troops have the latest KV tank, the armour of which the German anti-tank guns cannot penetrate. The Soviet Air Force rages overhead. The 5th Airborne Assault Corps has landed behind the German forces. The Soviet 8th, 9th, and 3rd Armies have become bogged down in long drawn-out bloody battles with the extra-high-power German forces in East Prussia, but behind this titanic battle, the extra-high-power Soviet 10th Army, having broken through the almost nonexistent defences, drives on to the Baltic Sea, thereby cutting off three German armies, two tank groups and Hitler's command post from the rest of the German troops.

From near L'vov, the most powerful Soviet front launches an attack on Cracow and a secondary attack on Lublin. The right flank of the extra-high-power Soviet grouping is covered by hills. On the left flank, a great battle flares up in which the Red Army loses thousands of tanks, aircraft and guns, and hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Under cover of this battle, two Soviet mountain armies, the 12th and the 18th, launch attacks along the mountain ridges, thereby cutting off Germany from its sources of oil. Soviet airborne assault

corps have landed in the hills. They capture and hold the passes, and prevent reserves being transferred to Romania.

The main events of the war are not taking place in either Poland or Germany. In the first hour of war, operating along with the air arm of the 9th Army and the Black Sea Fleet, the 4th Soviet Air Corps delivers a heavy shock strike at the Ploesti oilfields, turning them into a sea of fire. Bombing raids on Ploesti continue round the clock. The glow from the oil fires is visible at night for many kilometres, while by day columns of black smoke hide the *horizon*. The 3rd Airborne Assault Corps has landed in the hills to the north of Ploesti. Operating in small elusive groups, it is destroying everything connected with the production, transportation and the refining of oil. Lieutenant-General Batov's 9th Special Rifle Corps has landed in the port of Constanza and to the south of it. Its objectives are the same: pipelines, oil storage tanks, and refineries. The most powerful of all Soviet armies, the 9th, has burst out onto the Romanian plains.

The Soviet 10th Army has not been able to break out to the Baltic Sea. It has suffered fearful losses. The Soviet 3rd and 8th Armies have been completely wiped out and their heavy KV tanks destroyed by German anti-aircraft guns. The Soviet 5th, 6th and 26th Armies have lost hundreds of thousands of soldiers, having been stopped on the approaches to Cracow and Lublin. At this moment, the Soviet High Command throws the Second Strategic Echelon into the battle. The difference is that the Wehrmacht has only one echelon and insignificant reserves, while the Red Army had two strategic echelons and three N K V D armies behind them. In addition, mobilization was declared in the Soviet Union as soon as the war began. This had given the Soviet High Command five million reservists in the first week of the war. These will replace Soviet losses, and over the months which follow will be formed into more than three hundred new divisions who will enable the war to continue.

Five Soviet airborne assault corps are completely destroyed, but their headquarters and rear sub-units remain on Soviet territory. These immediately take in tens of thousands of reservists to make up their losses, and in addition to this, five new airborne assault corps are formed. Both Soviet tank troops and air force suffer enormous losses in the initial battles, but Soviet war industry is not destroyed by the enemy air force, nor does it fall into enemy hands. The biggest tank-producing plants in the world, in Khar'kov, Stalingrad, and Leningrad do not stop their production of tanks, but considerably increase it. But even that is not the most important thing.

The German Army still has tanks, but no fuel for them. The infantry still has armoured personnel carriers, and the artillery still has tractors, but no petrol for them. There are still aircraft, but no fuel for them. Germany has a powerful naval fleet, but it is not in the Baltic. Even if it were to appear there, there would be no fuel for active operations. The German Army has thousands of wounded who have to be evacuated to the rear. There are ambulances, but no fuel for them. The German Army has a great number of motor vehicles and motorcycles for moving troops about, to keep them supplied, and for reconnaissance, but there is no fuel for them either.

The fuel is in Romania, which has proved impossible to defend by the usual methods. Stalin knew this, and so did Zhukov. Hitler also knew this all too well.

In August 1941, the Second Strategic Echelon completes the Vistula-Oder operation by capturing bridges and springboards on the Oder. A new operation in great depth is begun from here. The troops cross the Oder in a continuous stream of artillery, tanks and infantry. There are heaps of caterpillar tracks, covered by a light film of rust, lying at the roadsides; as soon as they join German roads, the high-speed tanks discard their tracks and forge swiftly ahead.

The troops meet endless columns of prisoners. Dust rises on the horizon. There they are, the oppressors of the people -shopkeepers, bourgeois doctors and architects, farmers and bank employees. The Chekists' work will be hard. Prisoners are cursorily interrogated at every stopping place. Then the NK VD investigates each one in detail, and establishes the degree of his guilt before the working people. But by now it has become necessary to expose the most dangerous of the millions of prisoners: the former Social Democrats, pacifists, socialists and National Socialists, former officers, policemen and ministers of religion.

Millions of prisoners have to be sent far away to the east and the north, in order to give them the opportunity, through honest labour, to expiate their guilt before the people. But the railways are not conveying prisoners. The railways are working for victory. The railways are carrying thousands of military trains laden with ammunition, fuel and reinforcements.

Where are the prisoners to go? The 4th Mechanized Corps has captured a concentration camp near Auschwitz. It was reported to higher authority, and permission was awaited to use it for its intended purpose.

Permission was refused; it was ordered that a museum be made of Auschwitz. New concentration camps must be built nearby.

More and more columns move westwards. The commissars take a few men from each of the passing columns, and take them to Auschwitz and show them around saying, 'Take a good look, and then go back and tell your comrades.'

The soldiers are then driven back to their battalions in political department cars, and they talk.

'Well, what was it like in Auschwitz, pal?'

'Nothing much, really.' The worldly-wise soldier in his black jacket shrugs his shoulders. 'Just like at home. Only their climate is better.'

The battalion drinks raw vodka before going into battle. The news is good. There's permission to take trophies, there's permission to pillage. The commissar is shouting. He has become hoarse. He's quoting Ilya Erenburg - let's break the pride of the arrogant German people!

The black jackets laugh. How shall we break their pride, with mass rape?

So none of this happened? Indeed it did happen - not in 1941, it is true, but in 1945. Then the Soviet soldier was permitted to plunder, though the term used for it was 'collecting trophies'. And they were also ordered to 'break German pride'. Millions of people fell into the clutches of the Soviet secret police. And they were driven off in endless columns to distant places. Not everyone returned.

There are few who remember that the slogan about liberating Europe and the whole world first rang out, not in 1945, but at the end of 1938. As he was completing the Great Purge in the Soviet Union, Stalin rewrote the entire history of communism and set it new goals in his book *History of the CPS U(b): A Short Course*. This became the principal handbook for all Soviet communists and all communists throughout the world. It concludes with a chapter on how the Soviet Union is encircled by capitalism. Stalin set the great goal, which

was to replace capitalist encirclement with socialist encirclement. The fight against capitalist encirclement had to go on until the last country in the world had become a 'republic' forming part of the Soviet Union.

'The USSR in capitalist encirclement' became the main subject of political studies in the Red Army. Propagandists, commissars, political workers, and commanders all united to lead every soldier in the Red Army to Stalin's simple and logical answers to problems. And over the iron battalions of the Red Army there thundered forth the song about the war of liberation which would begin on the order from Stalin:

With spitting fire and gleaming steel now flashing
Machines set forth, their fierce crusade alight,
When Comrade Stalin sends us into battle,
And our First Marshal leads us in the fight.

This is how a Soviet air general described the future war in *Pravda*:

What joy and happiness will shine in the faces of those who will receive here in the Great Kremlin Palace the *last* republic into the brotherhood of nations of the whole world! I envisage clearly the bomber planes destroying the enemy's factories, railway junctions, bridges, depots and positions; low-flying assault aircraft attacking columns of troops and artillery positions with a hail of gunfire; and assault landing ships putting their divisions ashore in the heart of the enemy's dispositions. The powerful and formidable air force of the Land of the Soviets, along with the infantry and tank and artillery troops will do their sacred duty and will help the enslaved peoples to escape from their executioners. (*Pravda*, Georgi Baidukov, 18 August 1940)

It is characteristic that, in the course of his lengthy article on the forthcoming war, the air general did not once call the war 'defensive', just as he did not once mention fighter aircraft which fight battles in the air. As

far as the general was concerned, only bomber planes, low-flying assault aircraft and assault landing aircraft would be needed in the war of 'liberation'.

Enough statements like this were published to fill many volumes. Wanda Vasilevskaya, the Polish communist who was given the rank of colonel-commissar in the Red Army, proclaimed in the pages of *Pravda* (9 November 1940) that not for long would the butchers go on drinking blood, not for long need the slaves go on rattling their chains - we'll liberate them all!

The Soviet communists declared their main objective quite openly - to liberate the whole world, and Europe first of all. This plan was actively pursued; in the course of 1940 alone, while Germany was fighting in the west, five new 'republics' were annexed into the Soviet Union. After this, it was openly declared that 'liberation' campaigns would continue, and enormous forces were created for this purpose. The next victim of 'liberation' could only have been Germany, or Romania; for Germany this would have meant immediate defeat.

THE CHIEF CULPRIT



Stalin's Grand Design to Start World War II

Viktor Suvorov

Author of Icebreaker: Who Started the Second World War?

**THE CHIEF
COLPRIT**

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Stalin's Grand Design to Start World War II

Viktor Suvorov

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To Scarlet Alexandra

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Preface

Hitler had a red flag. And Stalin had a red flag. Hitler ruled in the name of the workers' class, his party was called the workers' party. Stalin also ruled in the name of the workers' class; his power system officially bore the title of "dictatorship of the proletariat." Hitler hated democracy and struggled against it. Stalin hated democracy and struggled against it. Hitler was building socialism. And Stalin was building socialism. Under the title of socialism Hitler saw a classless society. And Stalin, under the title of socialism, saw a classless society. In the midst of the classless society built by Hitler, and in that built by Stalin, flourished slavery in the truest sense of the word.

Hitler held his road to socialism as the only correct one, and viewed all other paths as distortions. Stalin also held his road to socialism uniquely correct, and saw all other paths as diversions from the principal line. Hitler mercilessly destroyed all his party comrades, such as Roehm and his followers, when they strayed from the correct path. Stalin also mercilessly destroyed all who strayed from the correct path. Hitler had a Four Year Plan. Stalin had Five Year Plans.

In Hitler's Germany, one party was in power, the others in jail. And in Stalin's Soviet Union, one party was in power, the others in jail. Hitler's party stood above the nation, and its leaders ruled the country. Stalin's party also stood above the nation, and its leaders ruled the country.

The most important holidays in Stalin's empire were May 1 and November 7–8. In Hitler's empire, they were May 1 and November 8–9.

Hitler had the *Hitler Jugend*, young Hitlerists. Stalin had the *Comsomol*, young Stalinists.

Stalin's official title was Fuehrer; Hitler's was leader. Pardon, Stalin's was leader and Hitler's Fuehrer. In translation, they are identical. Stalin declared that Russians were responsible for all outstanding scientific and technological advances: the hot-air balloon, locomotive, airplane, radio, etc. Hitler claimed the same for Germans.

Hitler loved grandiose structures. He laid in Berlin the foundation to the largest building in the world—the House of Assembly. Its dome spanned 250 meters in diameter, by

some counts. The main hall was to have the capacity to hold 150,000 people. Stalin also loved grandiose structures. He laid in Moscow the foundation for the largest building in the world—the Palace of Soviets. Stalin’s main hall was smaller than Hitler’s, but the entire edifice was much higher. The 400-meter-high building resembled a pedestal for the 100-meter-tall statue of Lenin.

Hitler planned to tear down Berlin, and in its place to raise a new city of monstrous structures. Stalin planned to tear down Moscow, and in its place to raise a new city of monstrous structures.

In Germany, Hitler was an outsider. He was born in Austria, and did not have German citizenship almost until the moment he came into power. For Russia, Stalin was an outsider. He was neither Russian, nor even a Slav. He was born in Georgia.

Sometimes, on rare occasions, Stalin invited foreign visitors to his Kremlin apartment. They were shocked by the modesty of the interiors: a plain table, a closet, an iron-post bed, a soldier’s bedcover. Hitler ordered the press to run a photograph of his living quarters. The world was shocked by his modesty: a plain table, a closet, an iron-post bed, a soldier’s bedcover. Nevertheless, in secluded areas in the midst of magical natural surroundings, Stalin created quite cozy and well-protected residential fortresses, which did not at all resemble an ascetic’s cell. Hitler also built impenetrable residence-fortresses in secluded areas in the midst of natural wonders, without frugality in his use of granite and marble.

Hitler’s mother dreamed that her son would become a priest. Stalin’s mother had the same dream for her son.

Hitler’s beloved, Geli Raubal, was more than twenty years his junior. Stalin’s beloved, Nadezhda Alliluieva, was more than twenty years his junior. Geli Raubal committed suicide, as did Nadezhda Alliluieva. The circumstances of Raubal’s death remain unclear. A theory proposes that Hitler murdered her. The circumstances of Alliluieva’s death are mysterious. A theory proposes that Stalin murdered her. The means of suicide (murder) for Geli Raubal was a handgun. It was Hitler’s personal handgun. The means of suicide (murder) for Nadezhda Alliluieva was a handgun. It was Stalin’s personal handgun.

Hitler said one thing, and did another. So did Stalin. Hitler began his rule under the slogan “Germany Wants Peace.” He proceeded to occupy half of Europe. Stalin fought for the “collective security of Europe,” without holding back any strength or means. Afterwards, he proceeded to occupy half of Europe.

Hitler had the Gestapo. Stalin had the *Narodnyi Kommissariat Vnutrennikh Del* (NKVD)—the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs. Hitler had Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Dachau. Stalin had the *Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerei* (GULAG)—the Main Prison Camp Directorate.¹

Hitler had Babyi Yar. Stalin had Katyn. Hitler massacred people by the millions. Stalin also killed people by the millions.

Hitler did not decorate himself with medals of honor, and neither did Stalin. Hitler wore a semi-military uniform without any signs of distinction, and Stalin wore a semi-military uniform without signs of distinction. Some might argue that later on Stalin acquired a taste for military titles, marshal batons, and gilded epaulettes. This is true, but Stalin only named himself Marshal in 1943 after the Stalingrad victory, when it finally became clear that Hitler would lose the war. At the time of receiving this title, Stalin was sixty-three years old. He wore the Marshal’s uniform for the first time for the Tehran Conference, while meeting

with Churchill and Roosevelt. We cannot in this respect compare Hitler and Stalin simply because Hitler did not live to a comparable age, to see comparable meetings, or comparable victories.

In all other respects, the comparison fits. Stalin did not wear a beard, but had a famous mustache. Hitler had no beard, but a famous mustache. Where does the difference lie? The difference lies in the shapes of the mustaches.

The difference also lies in the fact that Hitler's actions were seen by the world as the greatest of crimes, while Stalin's actions were considered by the world as a struggle for peace and progress.

The world hated Hitler, and commiserated with Stalin. Hitler conquered half of Europe, and the rest of the world declared war against him. Stalin conquered half of Europe, and the world sent him greetings. To ensure that Hitler could not hold on to the conquered European countries, the West sank German ships, bombed German cities, and then landed a massive and powerful army on the European continent. To enable Stalin to conquer and hold on to the other half of Europe, the West gave Stalin hundreds of warships, thousands of war planes and tanks, hundreds of thousands of the world's best war vehicles, and millions of tons of its best fuel, ammunition, and supplies.

This book is about Stalin's aggressive endeavors, about his role in plotting World War II—the bloodiest slaughter in human history. Perhaps one might become suspicious: in exposing Stalin, am I attempting to exonerate Hitler? No, I am not. For me, Hitler remains a heinous criminal. But if Hitler was a criminal it does not at all follow that Stalin was his innocent victim, as Communist propaganda portrayed him before the world.

Acknowledgments

I have planned to write this book since I discovered that the Soviet version of the history of World War II was a lie and concealed the USSR's responsibility for planning the start of the war. The primary reason for my decision to defect to the West in 1978 was to make my discoveries available to the Russian people and the world public. Since then I have been able to publish several books on military topics. All of them received wide acclaim in the West, but that was not the case with the book of my lifework—*The Icebreaker*, published in English in Great Britain in 1990. It quickly sold out, but for reasons never explained to me, the publisher refused to print further editions.

It quickly became apparent that the Western academic community was as reluctant as the Communist propaganda apparatus to accept my new interpretation of the cause of World War II. Instead of confronting my arguments the way the Soviets did, my Western opponents chose a different kind of confrontation—silence.

Meanwhile, communism and the Soviet Union collapsed. In 1990 *The Icebreaker* was published in Russian in Moscow and produced a firestorm. The first edition of *The Icebreaker* totaled 320,000 copies; the second, 1,000,000. Hundreds of thousands of copies of my other books on the same topic, including *The Day M*, *The Last Republic*, *The Purification*, and *The Suicide*, quickly sold out. Two television documentaries based on *The Icebreaker* were produced in Russia. Dozens of Russian historians rushed to explore the new horizons opened by my book. Some of them argued and disagreed with my interpretations of specific episodes or details; others raised new questions and suggested new theories.

A similar response to my book was aroused in former Communist countries. In Poland I became a celebrity overnight. Baltic countries incorporated my findings into their official history and textbooks. More important was the flood of letters I began to receive from 1990 from all over the world, but mostly from the former Soviet Union. People provided me with their unique insights and sent me copies of documents in support of my theory. Many of these details, as well as evidence from newly published materials, are incorporated in *The Chief Culprit*.

However, after encountering a virtual academic boycott in the West, I gave up trying to publish my books in the West. In 1999 I received an inquiry from a man who introduced himself as Alexei Sobchenko, an American of Russian origin, about the English-language version of *The Icebreaker*. I curtly replied that there was no interest in the West for this book. Besides, I was too busy to waste time pursuing an unrealistic goal. “Well, probably, you should write another book, since *The Icebreaker* was written for Russian readers, and hardly can be understood by people who did not live in the Soviet Communist society,” replied Sobchenko. “Besides, you wrote four more books after *The Icebreaker* and it would be a good opportunity to update and summarize them, and add your new discoveries.”

Alexei was introduced to Jerry and Leona Schecter, who found my ideas challenging, and Leona agreed to become my literary agent for this book. Eventually they became my friends and did much more for this book than a literary agent’s job requires. I would also like to thank Dr. Albert Weeks for his longtime support and efforts on my behalf.

Maria Samorodina-Erb, who at the time was a student at the University of Pennsylvania, volunteered to translate the book into English. Russian Americans Vlad Barash, Leonid Avrashov, and Olga Cherny helped to translate additional chapters. Serghei Kharlamov—a Moscow-based historian, checked the text for factual accuracy. Yuri Felshtinsky, a historian from Boston, worked to tailor the text for Western readers. Misha Shauli, from Israel, skillfully applied his wide knowledge of World War II history to correcting, editing, and retranslating the text as it evolved. Actually, Misha’s role in this book was so crucial that, unwillingly, he ended up becoming my editor for *The Chief Culprit*. Copy editor Jehanne Moharram’s diligence and concern improved the final editing and proofreading. Nothing, neither the first Russian-language version of *The Icebreaker* nor this new book, would have been possible without the assistance of my devoted wife Tatiana.

I often doubted that this book would be published. It never would have been possible without the dedication of those I have mentioned and those who must remain anonymous, for their safety, who sent me new corroborating archival materials and relevant personal details. Richard Russell, director of the Naval Institute Press, has been instrumental in bringing *The Chief Culprit* to print, and to him and his dedicated colleagues I am deeply grateful. Happily, he proved me wrong in thinking its publication would never happen in the West.

Introduction

Solving puzzles is not for everyone, but for me it is a passion. I feel that I am truly blessed, for fitting pieces together is my job. It is strenuous work that mobilizes your patience and attention; but the benefits are great. You switch off the world of turmoil, you forget about your concerns, debts, and ailments. Hated faces of enemies and opponents dissolve into darkness. Your heart starts beating calmly and steadily. Your brain is cleansed of evil plots, and your soul freed of dirt and soot. No, I am not an archaeologist who, out of clay pieces, assembles an ancient Egyptian pot, and from glass fragments, a precious Roman vase. Neither am I an anthropologist, who out of tiny splinters of bone assembles the skeleton of a mammoth hunter. I am a spy. An intelligence operative of a rare breed, an analyst from the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces (GRU).¹

For some, intelligence work is violent: kidnapping and killing, or breaking into safes to steal secrets. For others, like myself, it is an office stuffed with books and thick folders piled high to the ceiling with papers that can never be straightened out. It is a green table lamp and a pot of coffee. The puzzles I had to work on were so huge they encompassed more than a hundred thousand pieces. Can you imagine the challenge? Nobody, including me, knew how many puzzles there were in the pile—one, two, or three? All I knew for sure was that some pieces were missing and could never be found. Which pieces belonged to which puzzle? Which ones were complete strays? Then came the most important task—to fill in the blanks. It is essentially the same as restoring a gigantic dinosaur from a fragment of a bone, or predicting the existence of a planet in the darkness of space based on gravitational anomalies. Archaeologists or astronomers can easily be compared to the people who process intelligence information. The difference is that intelligence achievements rarely come out in the open.

You might wonder, how does one become an intelligence operative? I started early. I was eleven years old when I joined the Soviet Army. Seven years of the “Military Boarding School” was a tough school of life. Not everyone who trained there became an intelligence analyst. They taught us situation analysis. They gave us pieces of a puzzle: one, two, three pieces. What did they mean? The answer had to come immediately. For example: the opponent has a tank company here, an artillery battalion there, a bridge here, and there is an ammo dump on the premises. What does he intend to do? What do we have to do if we are

stronger at the moment? What if we are weaker? After graduation some of us were chosen for the Frunze High Command Army School in Kiev. That school was training intelligence operatives. Instead of four years it took me three and I graduated with honors.

I started my service duty as an officer in the Carpathian military district. Soon I was transferred to the Volga Military District whose headquarters were in Kuibyshev, the unofficial capital of the Soviet Union that was created when Moscow was threatened by the German invasion in 1941. Stalin and the most important government organizations were in Moscow, but the larger part of the government ministries and all of the foreign embassies and missions were in Kuibyshev. In case of a crisis Stalin was supposed to relocate there. This “spare” capital of the Soviet Union continued to function in the time of peace. All the political, economic, and military data on the United States of America and other countries was processed in Moscow. Simultaneously and independently of Moscow that same data was analyzed in Kuibyshev. That is what I was doing there at the command post.

They had taught us at the Academy to trust no one, to question every fact, to verify every piece of data, to doubt everything. If a hundred secret agents are reporting one way, and one sounds out of place and makes no sense, deal with him. No one will trust him or you, they will laugh at you, and they will not believe you. But this is how great discoveries are made. It is easy to repeat known facts. It is much more difficult to find something that nobody knows. And if you find it, you will be misunderstood and contradicted a lot at first. Then you find proof for it and convince your superiors. I did exactly that, and I was noticed. They sent me to the topmost secret military academy in the Soviet Union. It was called the Soviet Army Academy. It was so secret that no one ever mentioned it in public. It took me three years to complete the course of study there. The curriculum was so intense that it could take fifteen years to complete, but it was compressed for a reason: it was a test. Those who could not handle the stress would not be able to handle intelligence work. The tempo was inhuman. You were flooded with thousands of messages simultaneously: pieces of secret telegrams, secret agents’ reports, images from space, photos from passing cars, fragments of taped conversations, wrinkled and dirty topographic maps found at the site of recent maneuvers. All that raw material had to be sorted, analyzed, and evaluated. Everybody knew those who excelled would get the most interesting assignments.

After graduation I was sent to Geneva, the world capital of espionage. My first job was attaché of the USSR Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva. That was my official title, but in reality I spent four years processing intelligence information.

At school they had taught me to ask, “Why?” They had taught me to look for reasons and the internal logic for everything. I believe my instructors overdid it because I started asking too many questions. Why could the Soviet Union launch the first satellite into space, and send up the first dog and human beings, but could not raise enough wheat to feed its own people? Why is America our enemy? Why doesn’t the United States like us? What if it is us who do not like them? Why? What do we need Africa for? What are our interests in Vietnam, Cuba, and Chile? Don’t we have enough land of our own? Have we resolved our own problems at home, and if not why are we trying to teach everybody else?

The head of my country told Americans: “We will bury you!” That was the essence of the Soviet Union’s foreign policy at the time. We were digging a grave for the United States and all the other countries of the world. Our foreign policy was the top priority. We had more nuclear submarines than all of the countries of the world combined. We also had more air-

borne divisions, tanks, and field artillery. We filled the world with Kalashnikovs. At the same time we could not feed ourselves. So here was the question: Why should we bury America? Are they in our way? If we bury the United States, who is going to feed us?

I became more and more bewildered as I tried to answer my own questions. I had been taught to notice strange occurrences, anomalies, exceptions to the rules. One strange thing that I noticed: No matter what happened in the Soviet Union our leaders always tried to conceal the negative aspects and show the positive. There were no private enterprises in the Soviet Union back then. All the media—and everything else, for that matter—belonged to the government. Our newspapers reported only what was advantageous to the government. For example, the media reported that crime was almost nonexistent and steadily declining. They wrote that everything was fine, culture was flourishing, the quality of life was getting better and better, we would soon surpass the United States. You could not find any negative news.

On the night of October 6, 1948, the city of Ashkhabad was leveled by an earthquake reported to have reached magnitude 10 on the Richter scale, the maximum strength. The epicenter was only twenty kilometers away from downtown. The disaster struck in the middle of the night when all of the people were asleep. The whole city collapsed instantaneously. The only building left standing was the city prison. Everything else turned into broken brick and stone rubble; 110,000 people died under the debris. The facts of this disaster became public only thirty years later. Back in 1948 not a single Soviet newspaper or radio station reported it. Not one government official commented on it. Furthermore, those who spoke about the earthquake were arrested and put in prison for “spreading false rumors.” You would ask yourself, why conceal an earthquake? That was the way the Soviet system worked: we are so good that we do not even have earthquakes!

On the same premise no media outlet or official in the Soviet Union mentioned the Chernobyl disaster when it occurred. The Swedes were the first to sound the alarm. The wind had blown the radioactive cloud from the Ukraine through Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and across the Baltic Sea to Sweden where the emergency warning equipment went off at a local nuclear power station. Swedish engineers could not figure out why their equipment was going off; they were looking for problems at their own station. It took them awhile to figure out that the radiation was in the air, carried by the wind from afar. After the international investigation had started the Soviet government admitted that there had been a small accident at the nuclear plant in Chernobyl. Even then the Soviets claimed that the accident was completely insignificant and no one should pay any attention to it.

There were other terrible catastrophes at the Soviet nuclear power stations and nuclear sites prior to Chernobyl, but they were kept under wraps. Soviet television shows relished tragedies elsewhere but nothing was said about our own. On October 24, 1960, the Chief Commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces, Chief Artillery Marshal M. I. Nedelin, was killed as a result of a rocket explosion. His death could not be concealed. The Soviet command announced it, but did not reveal how many people perished with him. Even now, eighteen years after Marshal Nedelin’s death, the *Soviet Military Encyclopedia*² does not specify where or how he died. The encyclopedia lists dates and places of birth and death for everyone but him.

Modern Russia inherited the tradition of hiding everything negative. When the nuclear submarine *Kursk* sank it was not possible to hush that up. The Russian authorities announced that the submarine was submerged, that communication with the crew was established, there

were no victims, and there was a hose pumping air into the vessel. For a week, the Russian government told tall tales about how everything at *Kursk* was going just fine. Later it turned out that there had been no communication with the people on board the *Kursk*, and nobody had pumped air in to them.

I gave you all of those examples to show that these are our traditions and rules. But there is an exception to these rules: June 22, 1941, the day when Germany attacked the Soviet Union. This day is described by Communist propaganda in truly dark colors. Thousands of books, tens of thousands of articles, and radio and TV broadcasts told about the blatant unpreparedness of the Red Army for military action. All of those sources paint a picture of stupid, cowardly Stalin who trusted Hitler. They tell us that after the Germans attacked, Stalin was so scared that he went into hiding and would not show himself. They talk about the army that had no good commanders, about outdated tanks and airplanes that were called “flying coffins,” about the terrible ineptitude of the Soviet military leaders, about the absence of war planning.

Hundreds of Western historians fell for those stories: if the Russians themselves were talking about their own stupidity, why not repeat it? Everyone is happy to laugh at someone else’s stupidity. As a result the whole world is laughing. I was taught to look for incoherence. There it was, gaping right at me. Why could we not talk about an earthquake, but could speak about bad tanks? Why was it that the Soviets, who thoroughly hid any mistakes, accidents, or catastrophes, made such a tremendous effort to emphasize the mistakes of 1941? Why did we expose the negative developments of 1941, while hiding data about a bad harvest? I took a closer look at the way our history was written and found something even more curious. In 1942 the Red Army suffered a number of monstrous defeats: in the Crimea, near Kharkov, Leningrad, and Rzhev. Our textbooks did not mention those. It struck me as strange that it was acceptable to talk about the defeats of 1941, but not about the defeats of 1942.

Let us look further. In July, August, September, and October of 1941 the Red Army suffered crushing defeats near Smolensk, Kiev, Uman, and Viazma. Our history books did not and still do not mention those either. What could that mean? When, where, and under what kind of circumstances would a person or a nation passionately try to prove that they are stupid and unfit for a fight? I found one example. Imagine a murderer in court trying to convince the jurors that he is not guilty of the crime because he is mentally challenged, completely blind and therefore cannot shoot, and too weak to raise an ax. In addition he says that he has no bullets to shoot, his gun is broken, and his ax is rusty. There is no reason anyone would deem themselves stupid, powerless, and unfit to do anything other than to get out of a situation where they can be accused of a crime.

That is exactly the way Communist propaganda behaved while describing the events of June 1941. Communist historians and propaganda masters went out of their way to hide any details that would enable an outsider to restore the reality of what was happening at the time. They would only show their stupidity and incapacity to the world. For example, Soviet textbooks did not give information about the number of tanks that the Red Army had at that time. The texts just said that the tanks were badly suited for battle. The books did not say anything about the number of planes. They just stated that the planes were outdated. I decided to compose the picture myself, to re-create that reality. I had to find all the shards, all the fragments, all the pieces that were scattered all over. I decided to start from the top. How many field armies were there in the Soviet Union in 1941? I looked through many books on

the subject but could not find the answer. Then I started to collect information about every field army individually in order to put the pieces together later. The results were amazing.

In June 1939, when Hitler was the enemy and his name was used to scare children and adults alike, the Soviet Union had two field armies. Neither of them was deployed in the European part of the Soviet Union. In August 1939 Stalin and Hitler, represented by Molotov and Ribbentrop, signed the non-aggression pact. We were told that Stalin decided to believe Hitler. I trusted that information, but here are some statistics: In June 1941 the Soviet Union had thirty-one field armies. Twenty-six of them were deployed in the European part of the country. This surprised me. While Hitler was considered an enemy we did not possess any armies against him, but as soon as the pact between Stalin and Hitler was signed, Stalin increased the number of Soviet armies from zero to twenty-six in a period slightly less than two years. How does that fit with stories of Stalin trusting Hitler?

A corps is the next level within an army. How many of those did we have? The answer is hidden. There are thousands of books about the war, but nobody ever talks about how many corps there were within the Red Army in June 1941. I collected all the data. When I put it together the results were, again, astounding.

How many divisions were there? And most importantly where were they positioned?

If you were analyzing a chess match you would want to know not only the number of pieces on the board but their positions too. The problem was that although there were mountains of books about the war written in the Soviet Union, none of them had a map demonstrating the deployment of the Soviet Forces. In a famous book by Marshal Zhukov, all the maps are colored. The only map that shows the deployment of the armed forces at the moment of Hitler's attack is black and white. It is also very small and shows the span from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea in six centimeters, less than two and a half inches. You could cover the whole theater of war between the Soviet Union and Germany with the palm of a child's hand. The map says that the 3rd, 4th, and 10th armies were deployed on the German border. It also states that there were other armies. But only nine of the twenty-six are named. The rest are omitted. Most important is that the deployment of the armies is not shown on the map. It is completely unclear where they really were. How can you analyze the beginning of a war if you do not know the number of the armed forces and their positions? I was determined to solve the puzzle. But how does one go about it?

I found a way. I was a student at the Academy at the time. Our professors urged us all to conduct independent scientific research in order to figure out who would make the best intelligence analysts. I took advantage of the situation and chose "The Attack of Germany on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941" as the title of my paper. I explained my interest in the subject easily. I said that it was a horrible tragedy and I wanted to study how Germany prepared for the attack, in order to make sure that nothing of the kind would ever happen again.

The topic of my research was approved and I was given access to closed archives. The most important things that I needed were the archives of the German army. The Red Army had captured them at the end of the war, transferred them from Berlin to Moscow, and placed them under lock and key. Almost nobody has access to these archives. I was bewildered: If Hitler was the aggressor, why not open the archives for all to see?

There could be only one answer: there was something in those archives that the Soviet leadership did not want to admit. There is an incredible number of German documents in

the archives in Podolsk, a small town near Moscow. There are piles and piles of boxes, most packed right after the end of World War II and never opened.

I had to be extra careful not to show my real interest. I asked the archive workers to assist me in my search to find maps of the deployment of the German troops. We found those, but I was looking for something else too and I finally found it. One of the maps showed the deployment of all the German troops just before the invasion. It also showed the positions of all the Red Army divisions the way German military intelligence pictured them just before the beginning of the war. That was exactly what I needed. I made a copy of it and all the other maps.

The map of the German troop deployment gave me quite a shock. The position of the divisions of the Red Army mirrored the position of the German Army. The border between the Soviet Union and Germany went through the territory of Poland which Stalin and Hitler had divided between them. The border was wavy. There was a big foreland of Soviet territory jutting into the German territory, like a Communist cape in the Nazi ocean. Then there was a big foreland of German territory that heavily indented the Soviet land. After that one could see a Soviet landmass going deep into the German territory again, and a German cape in the Soviet territory. The border took the form of two notched wheels. The red notches were cutting into Hitler's brown wheel, and the brown notches were cutting into Stalin's red wheel.

The Soviet forces were concentrated in those two masses of land, two capes that were indenting the German territory. The German divisions, tanks, artillery, and airfields were situated right in front, on the left and on the right of the Soviet troops. Even in peace time, Soviet divisions, corps, and armies were almost encircled by German troops. From a defensive point of view such deployment of the Soviet troops was useless and stupid. The only thing Hitler had to do was to attack the troops at the base of those promontories and the best units of the Red Army would be trapped. The German divisions were also situated in the promontories reaching far into the Soviet territory. They also were almost encircled by Soviet troops in peacetime. Stalin could close the mousetrap just as easily. From the defense point of view this kind of deployment of the German troops was pure suicide. I can only say that the Germans were not preparing for defense. They were getting ready for a sudden strike. For a sudden attack this position was very beneficial.

The Red Army was also preparing for a sudden attack. If you look at the position of the Soviet divisions from the point of view of an offensive, you could not imagine a better deployment. The airfields of the Red Army were moved all the way up to the border. Communist propaganda masters laugh at that. They say: "Look how stupid the Soviet generals were, they situated the airfields in such a fashion that they fell to the enemy in the first hours of the war."

The German airfields were also situated almost on the border itself. Why is it that nobody laughs at them? This way of positioning the troops and logistical forces does not make sense from a defensive point of view. If you look at it from the point of view of offense it makes total sense.

There was no difference between the actions of Stalin and those of Hitler. Hitler just happened to strike first. If Stalin had been the one to attack first, all the advantages of the deployment of the German troops would have turned into disadvantages.

In order to understand what happened I will begin the story from 1917 when the Communists took power in Russia, instead of 1941, when Hitler attacked Stalin.

It is legitimate to wonder if German intelligence made a mistake. What if the Germans were wrong in assessing the situation in the summer of 1941? I had to find an answer to that, and I did. German intelligence saw the situation correctly, but it did not see all of it. The real picture was much graver. The concentration of Soviet troops on the German border was frightful. Anyone can see it for themselves. All you would have to do is open the memoirs of the Soviet generals and put all the data about Soviet divisions, corps, and armies into a computer. Every Soviet general describes his division or corps but also speaks about his neighbors, about superior units, and about subordinates. It takes years to put it all together, but anyone who does that will be convinced that all the data confirm what I said earlier, and the general picture is terrifying.

The following simple fact can serve as additional proof of the aggressive ambition of the Red Army. More than sixty years have passed since the Germans attacked the Soviet Union, but neither the government of modern Russia nor the General Staff ever made public any maps that would demonstrate the deployment of all Soviet divisions on June 21, 1941. All that information remains a state secret. The highest level of secrecy in the Soviet Union is a document labeled “Top Secret: Special Folder.” At present the Kremlin archives contain 215,000 “Special Folders.” Nobody has access to them. In addition, there are hundreds of thousands of documents labeled “Secret,” “Top Secret,” and “Top Secret: Of Special Importance.”

Sometimes the Kremlin rulers try to show their liberalism and good will. A small number of those secrets come out in the open. They are always heinous secrets. For example, the cooperation agreement between the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) and the Gestapo became public knowledge. It was signed on November 11, 1938. Beria and Muller signed that document. What areas of cooperation could there be between two of the bloodiest organizations in the world’s history? The answer is the following: in their main specialty—suppressing freedom and engaging in the mass elimination of people.

Another document that surfaced recently speaks about secret contacts between Stalin and Hitler. It is dated February 19, 1942. Stalin was an ally to Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. He was trying to strike an agreement with Hitler behind their backs. When papers like these become available to the public one should remember that they are just a drop in a bucket. Those documents are the ones the authorities are not ashamed to show. All the documents that are not accessible to researchers contain secrets that are much scarier and dirtier.

I am not a historian but I believe that there are a lot of similarities between history and intelligence. Both a historian and an intelligence officer have to look for things that nobody knows about. The difference is that a historian would treat the Soviet Union as a regular country, just like any other. That is why he would use traditional methods of historical science. I consider the Soviet Union a criminal conglomerate. The Soviet leaders have committed uncountable acts of atrocity against their own people and against neighboring nations. That is why for me the history of the Soviet Union should be studied using methods of criminology and intelligence rather than classical scientific research. Vladimir Bukovsky was correct in noticing that Western politicians and diplomats just cannot understand the motives of the Soviet leaders. If a policeman from Manhattan were to try to deal with them he would have made sense of their behavior immediately. A policeman would have understood and would have been able to predict all of the moves and actions of the Kremlin rulers. I

study the history of the Soviet Union using methods of intelligence. The first rule is: do not believe what is officiously demonstrated to you; seek what is hidden. They are demonstrating the “unpreparedness” of the Soviet Union for the war, but hiding the offensive war plans.

There are documents that point directly to the fact that the Soviet Union was readying itself for an offensive against all of Europe in the summer of 1941. I figured out that one of those documents was kept in the Central Archive of the Russian Ministry of Defense, in holding #16, register #2951, case #241, pages 1 through 16. It is a long story. I would have to write a separate book about how I managed to figure out that this document exists. Juxtaposing facts and evidence, I came to the conclusion that on March 11, 1941, Marshal Timoshenko and Generals Zhukov and Vasilevsky, the heads of the USSR People’s Defense Commissariat, forwarded to Stalin the plan of invading Germany. Both generals became marshals two years after that.

While talking on BBC radio on August 17, 1996, I addressed the Russian leaders. I told them: “If you have nothing to hide, publish the document!”

What was left for them to do? They published the document. The book titled *1941* came out a year and a half later, in March 1998. It was a collection of documents. The collection was compiled by A. N. Yakovlev, a former member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, E. T. Gaidar, a former head of the Russian Government, E. M. Primakov, a former head of the foreign intelligence service (who later became the head of the Russian government), and many other respectable politicians.

The answer to my public demand to publish the document came almost immediately, although the documents still had to be collected and the book prepared for print. The document I speak about can be found on page 741 of the first volume. I started reading it with excitement. But what was going on? Out of sixteen pages only five were published. The document starts with the description of the German army, and with suppositions about the intentions of the German command. That is all. Once the document goes into describing the Red Army Forces and the plans of the Soviet Union, there is a heavy square bracket, followed by an ellipsis, and another square bracket. After that one can see the signatures of Marshal Timoshenko, and Generals Zhukov and Vasilevsky. The document stops at the most interesting moment.

Two volumes are filled with garbage, documents that are completely insignificant. The leaders of the former Soviet Union ran out of paper before they could publish the war plan. Respectable Russian politicians act as petty crooks. The trick is very old: you take paper and cut it neatly; then you put it in a wad of money to make it seem bigger. That is exactly how they comprised the collection of documents they called *1941*. It looks like a serious publication, it has good solid binding, the paper is high quality, and names of respectable authors are on the cover. There is a lot of unimportant flimflam in order to distract the reader’s attention, but no substance, just emptiness.

I want to use this opportunity to repeat my demand: Rulers of Russia, publish document CA MD RF, H. #16, R. #2951, C. #241, pp. 1–16. I will tell you more: open the war archives! Sixty years have passed since the German invasion. It happened in *the first half of the last century*. Why are the archives still closed? What are you hiding from the world?

Until you stop fooling the world with your grifter tricks, I will be forced to use methods of military intelligence to study the history of the twentieth century.

The Struggle for Peace, and Its Results

We rely entirely on the hope that our revolution will unleash a European revolution. If the rising people of Europe do not crush capitalism, we will undoubtedly be crushed ourselves. Either the Russian revolution creates a whirlwind of struggle in the West, or the capitalists of all nations will strangle our revolution.

—LEON TROTSKY, SPEECH DURING SEIZURE OF POWER, THIRD SPEECH AT THE SECOND ALL-
RUSSIAN CONFERENCE OF SOVIETS, OCTOBER 26, 1917

World War I ended on November 11, 1918. Within forty-eight hours, on the morning of November 13, an attempt was made to bring about a second world war. At that time the concepts and names “World War I” and “World War II” did not yet exist. The war of 1914–18, because it was a collision of gigantic empires, was called the Imperialist War. It was also called the Great War, because it surpassed all previously known wars in magnitude, expenditure, and number of participants. No previous wars had known such extended fronts, such intense battles, such massive losses, or such great social and economic consequences. The barbarity of a global slaughterhouse was so obvious that an overwhelming majority of people considered a repeated occurrence of such madness impossible. For this reason, the war of 1914–18 had another name, which is now forever forgotten, the Last War. Many thought that the gory absurdity of the Great War would sober all its participants, and eternally eradicate the desire to fight.

Nevertheless, a small group of people existed in Russia, who dreamed that a second world war would be crueler, that the bloodshed would encompass not only Europe and part of Asia but all the other continents as well. These people called themselves Bolsheviks, or Communists. Vladimir Lenin headed the group, and called their organization a political party. However, the infrastructure, tactics, and strategies of Lenin’s group did not resemble those of a political party, but of a small, well-organized, conspiratorial cult. Lenin’s party had a perceptible structure, parallel to which ran a secret, invisible organization. Just like a mafia organization, Lenin’s party had open and entirely legal associations and undertakings, along

with a secret unifying force that always remained in the shadows. On the one hand, representatives from Lenin's party sat in the Russian parliament (the Duma). On the other hand, Lenin and his followers believed the party's funds could be enhanced by any means, including bank robbery. They reasoned there was nothing wrong if occasionally, during the robberies, arbitrary casualties arose, as long as the most important goal of maintaining money in the party cashbox was met. From this point of view, Lenin's cult must be called an organized crime gang, not a political party of a new sort.

The leaders of this cult concealed their real names. Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Molotov, and Kirov: these are all aliases. They all had serious reasons for not revealing their true names. For example, under the alias of "Stalin" hid a bank robber whose real name was Dzhugashvili. He was in charge of filling the party's cashbox.

Lenin and his gang worked hard to draw out World War I as much as possible. As early as September 1916, during the peak of the war, Lenin declared that one world war might be insufficient, and humanity might need another one of the same or even greater destructive scale. He reasoned that war is the mother of revolution, and world war is the mother of world revolution. The longer the war lasts, the more bloodshed and destruction it brings, the sooner revolution takes place. If a world revolution did not arise as a result of the first world war, a second world war becomes necessary.

Lenin's party was not only the most militaristic in the world, but also the most peace-loving. In 1914, almost all political parties of the nations at war voted in unison in the parliaments of their countries to create war credits. Lenin's party counted among the very few exceptions. Together with another branch of Russian Social Democrats, the Mensheviks, Lenin's party voted against increasing military expenditures, despite the obvious understanding that during wartime military expenditures cannot be the same as during peacetime. On July 26, 1914, during an emergency session of the Duma, the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks left the meeting hall "as a protest against the current military insanity."

Lenin's party began an unprecedented campaign for peace. By September–October of 1917, the Bolshevik party had seventy-five newspapers and magazines, with a total daily run estimated as high as 600,000 copies. All these publications advocated for immediate peace. The Communists distributed their publications free of charge in city streets, in factories, in military barracks, and in the trenches at the front. On top of the newspapers and magazines, Lenin's party printed millions of books, brochures, pamphlets, and proclamations. Soldiers were told to try to establish friendly relations with the enemy, instead of shooting at them. Communist slogans urged the troops: "Put down your rifles!" "Go home!" "Let's transform the Imperialist War into a Civil War!"

In the fall of 1917, under the leadership of Leon Trotsky and Vladimir Lenin, the Communists carried out a coup and seized control of the capital of the Russian empire, Petrograd (formerly St. Petersburg). For the first time in world history, a group of people living and working under fake names gained control of the capital of such a vast country. Most nations of the world did not recognize the new authorities as legitimate. The only exceptions were countries with which Russia was at war, Germany and Austria-Hungary. Only the enemy recognized Lenin's command. German money was secretly transferred to Lenin's party—both before and after the coup.

Moments after the new power came into being, the first official document—the Peace Decree—was created and signed. The army and navy immediately ceased all military activity.

Every regiment elected committees of soldiers. Delegates from each regiment began conducting their own peace talks with the enemy. They paid no attention to their regimental or division commanders, or higher authorities. At first every regiment, and later on every battalion, independently designed the conditions for peace, without taking into consideration the demands of the other battalions. The Russian army crumbled into hundreds of uncontrollable regiments and thousands of battalions, ceasing to exist as a single unified organism. The front collapsed. Nobody was left to defend Russia. Following the decree to stop fighting, Lenin and his cohorts immediately instituted committees to demobilize and take apart the Russian army.

No major power had ever voluntarily dismantled its army during peacetime. Yet Lenin and Trotsky demolished the Russian army during the peak of World War I, when victory was within their grasp. Germany's position was already completely hopeless during this time. Germany had almost no natural resources. Germany and her allies were blockaded, and had no supply route by sea. Russia's natural resources, in contrast, were limitless. In the fight against Germany, Russia was allied with the mighty French and British colonial empires. In April 1917, the United States of America joined the conflict and declared war on Germany. Against such formidable adversaries, Germany could not have triumphed under any circumstances. All Russia had to do in the given situation was to patiently wait for Germany to beg for peace.

Instead, what happened was something even the German Kaiser could not have dreamed of. The Russian army, acting under Lenin and Trotsky's orders, abandoned its trenches and went home. Thousands of guns, mortars, machine guns, millions of small arms, and huge stores of ammunition, uniforms, and supplies were left behind on the frontlines. Lenin's "Peace Decree" was an act of Russia's utter capitulation before Germany. From this moment the Eastern Front ceased to exist. Germany received the chance to concentrate its efforts on the Western Front against Russia's former allies. In adopting the "Peace Decree" Russia betrayed her allies. Lenin and Trotsky singlehandedly brought Russia out of the war and made their country subject to Germany's mercy.

Despite Russia's withdrawal, the situation in Germany and Austria-Hungary continued to worsen. A general strike broke out in Austria-Hungary in January 1918. During the same month, a general strike was called in Germany. Both countries stood on the verge of chaos. Russian Communists saved their day. To be capable of fighting in the war as long as possible, Germany needed strategic resources in large quantities. Lenin and Trotsky again came to Kaiser Wilhelm's aid. They signed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in March 1918. The Russian Communists, without battle, handed over approximately a million square kilometers of their territory to the Germans. Fifty-six million people, about a third of the Russian empire's population, inhabited this territory. The occupied area encompassed more than a quarter of the nation's cultivated lands; it housed 26 percent of the railways, and major industrial capabilities. Seventy-three percent of Russia's iron and steel was cast in these territories, and 89 percent of Russia's coal was mined there.

Most important of all, these were Russia's most fertile lands. Mass export of food to Germany began immediately. A financial agreement, signed on August 27, 1918, stated that Russia had to pay Germany war reparations totaling 6 billion marks.¹ Without such a gift, Germany would have been unable to support herself until November of 1918.

Communists are proud of their love of peace. However, the stubbornness with which they fought for peace far surpasses common sense, to the point of suspicion. For the sake of

peace, Lenin and Trotsky sacrificed 56 million of their subjects, without considering their wishes and needs. What good was peace for these people, if their homes were taken over by foreign occupants? For the sake of peace, Lenin and Trotsky handed Russia's most fertile lands over to Germany, causing widespread famine in the remaining territories. Without bread, meat, gold, steel, iron, and coal, Russia could not exist. What good is peace if it brings the death of the nation?

It was clear that Germany could not successfully continue to fight on two fronts, but the defeat of Germany would mean the end of the war. Consequently, Lenin's task, to prolong the war, was to create a situation in which Germany fought on only one front. For this purpose, he took Russia out of the war. Lenin's plot was simple: let Germany and Austria-Hungary fight against Great Britain, France, and the United States. Let them wear out each other's strengths. Most importantly, do not allow the flames of war to be extinguished. Russia would remain on the side and add fuel to the fire. While "peace" was being made on Lenin's orders in Brest-Litovsk, intensive preparations for a revolt against the German government were underway in Petrograd. The revolutionaries published half a million copies of a Communist newspaper in German, *Die Fackel* (The Torch). Even before the Brest-Litovsk Treaty was signed, in January 1918 a German Communist organization, *Spartakus*, was formed in Petrograd. The newspapers *Die Weltrevolution* (The World Revolution) and *Die Rote Fahne* (The Red Banner) were also born, not in Germany but in Russia under Lenin's orders, while he made peace with Germany's government. Communism would become deeply rooted in Germany in the 1920s. Part of the credit for this goes to Lenin, who fueled the instability of German politics precisely at the time when he had a peace treaty with the German government. While Germany was conducting a hopeless and devastating military campaign in the West, Lenin was subverting its political system.

Finally, World War I ended. In November 1918 Europe's condition was exactly what the Kremlin leaders had hoped it would be. The economic hardships caused by war had reached their limits in all the nations. Europe was facing an unprecedented crisis that encompassed all spheres of life, including the economy, politics, and ideology. Germany admitted her defeat. The monarchy crumbled. Anarchy and famine ruled the land.

Just then, Lenin and Trotsky's love for peace vanished. The government of Soviet Russia issued, on November 13, 1918, an order for the Red Army to begin offensive operations against Europe.

A review of the protocols of any of the countless meetings and congresses of that period reveals that the only question on the agenda was the World Revolution. The aim of the Soviet advance narrowed down to installing Communism on the European continent. In a few days, the Red Army crossed into the Baltic countries. The Communist government of Estonia was formed on November 29, that of Latvia on December 4. Lithuania followed on December 8, 1918. On December 17, a manifesto published in Riga named Germany as the imminent objective of the offensive. The most important goal of the operation: fuel a new world war.

Lenin's calculations were precise: Worn out by World War I, the German empire is unable to bear the pressures of another war. The war ends with the crushing of the empire and is followed by a revolution. In war-torn Europe, on the remaining fragments of the old empires, Communist countries arise, remarkably similar to Lenin's Bolshevik regime. Lenin was ecstatic: "We are at the doorstep of world revolution!"

2

First Attempts to Unleash a Second World War

The West, full of imperialist cannibals, has turned into the hearth of darkness and slavery. Our task lies in destroying this hearth, and bringing happiness and consolation to all worker nations.

—JOSEPH STALIN, MOSCOW, DECEMBER 15, 1918

As a result of World War I, Europe found itself in a situation which the Communists called revolutionary. In 1918 Communist parties formed in many European countries. In Kiel, German navy seamen called a strike on November 3, 1918. Two days later, the strike spread to all of northern Germany, and on November 7–8 it reached the main industrial regions and the capital city, Berlin. The strikes were suppressed, or subsided on their own. But in January 1919, a Soviet republic was declared in Bremen. The Hungarian Soviet Republic formed in March. In April, the Bavarian Soviet Republic followed. Following the Soviet example, these Communist nations formed Red Armies and secret police squads, which called themselves “extraordinary commissions in the struggle against counterrevolution.” These extraordinary commissions immediately instigated a reign of terror against all layers of society, and the Red Armies threw themselves into revolutionary wars to “liberate” the neighboring nations. A part of the Hungarian Red Army marched into Slovakia and, on June 20, 1919, proclaimed the Slovak Soviet Republic. A Communist government formed immediately and declared a policy of nationalization of all private lands and annulment of private property. It nationalized all commercial enterprises, banks, and transportation systems. For silencing the voices of discontent, they formed the Slovak Red Army and Extraordinary Commission. At the same time Soviet Ukraine declared war on Romania, and began preparations to advance west, to connect with Soviet Hungary.

Lenin and Trotsky prepared to establish Communism in Asia as well as in Europe. On August 5, 1919, Trotsky wrote a secret memorandum arguing that “the road to Paris and London lies through the cities of Afghanistan, Punjab, and Bengal.” He proposed “preparations for a march on India, to help the Indian revolution.” To achieve this goal Trotsky said

it was necessary to form “a political and military command center of Asian revolution, and a revolution academy” in the Urals or in Turkestan, to form a special corps of 30,000 to 40,000 horsemen and “unleash them on India” to help the “native revolutionaries.”

Civil war raged in Russia and distracted the efforts to ignite a second world war in 1918 and 1919. The main resources of the Red Army were tied up on internal fronts fighting against those who opposed Communism. Lenin and Trotsky were not able to send aid to the Communist nations that sprouted in Central Europe, nor could the Red Army reach Germany.

In 1919 in Moscow, Lenin and Trotsky created the Communist International, abbreviated as Comintern. This organization defined itself as “the Headquarters of World Revolution.” The goal of the Comintern was the creation of a “World Soviet Socialist Republic.” Thus began the process of creating and strengthening Communist parties on all continents. These parties constituted sections of the Comintern and were subordinate to its leadership.

Allegedly, all Communist parties in the world, including the Russian party, had an equal status. They all contributed to the communal bank of the Comintern. Delegates from all Communist parties of the world held congresses, developed strategies and tactics, and elected a common leadership—the Executive Committee of the Comintern. This organ oversaw all the Communists of the world. The Communist Party of Russia officially was a section of the Comintern, on equal footing with all the other parties, and bound to abide by commonly developed decisions.

In practice, however, the reality was an entirely different story. All the funds in the Comintern budget came from the gold reserves of Soviet Russia. All the Communist parties of the world were paid for by Moscow and existed only through financing from the Kremlin. The Comintern itself was also created with Kremlin funds. The leaders of the Comintern lived and worked in Moscow, under tight control of the Soviet secret police. All their directives came from the Kremlin. Only those who were agreeable to the Kremlin leaders, and who carried out all their orders without dissent, were chosen.

The Comintern was unique. Never before had history seen anything like it. In practically all the nations of the world, from Japan to Uruguay and Chile, Communist parties sprouted and conducted a line of politics that was dictated from Moscow. In many cases, delegates from Communist parties in those countries were members of trade unions, of legislative bodies in their governments, and sometimes even members of governments—but that was only the visible side of Comintern activity.

At the same time, Communists conducted not only an open struggle, but also a secret one. Stated briefly, their ideology narrowed down to advocating:

- The old world must be destroyed, and a new one built in its place.
- To destroy the old world and build a new one, it is necessary to gain political power. Gaining political power requires using all measures, ranging from the most peaceful to the most violent, from the most open to the most secretive.
- The struggle for a new world must unfold not on a national scale, but on a world scale. The interests of the World Revolution are more important than the interests of individual countries.

Every person joining the Communist Party accepted this ideology, meaning he or she agreed to fight against the interests of their own nation, if it became necessary, and to use all

methods, including covert and violent action. Suddenly the intelligence services of the Soviet Union received legions of volunteers from practically every nation in the world. All that remained was to select the most competent ones, train them, finance them, and assign them to missions in the fight against their own countries and governments.

In the 1920s Soviet intelligence suddenly became the most powerful intelligence organization in the world. Thousands of Germans, Czechs, Hungarians, Americans, English, Japanese, and French selflessly worked in the name of a bright future for all humanity. In actuality, they worked for the interests of the Kremlin.

On June 28, 1919, the Versailles Treaty was signed, establishing peace between Germany and the allied victors. Victors always come in large numbers. The victors, aside from Great Britain, the United States, and France, also included Bolivia, Guatemala, Haiti, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras, Liberia, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Uruguay, and many others. However, overall the Versailles Treaty was a treaty between vanquished Germany and victorious France and Great Britain, which had the full support of the United States of America.

The conditions dictated by the Allies at Versailles demanded from the vanquished country virtually complete disarmament. All military drafts were abolished in Germany, the number of armed forces fixed at 100,000, the General Staff and all academies disbanded. The treaty forbade the creation of a new General Staff and new academies. Armed forces could only be assembled through voluntary enlistment and used only for maintaining internal order and security. The surface naval fleet was cut drastically; the submarine fleet was abolished completely. The majority of German fortifications were to be blown up. Germany lost the right to have heavy artillery, tanks, submarines, and aviation (including blimps). It was forbidden to have or to design chemical weapons, and all supplies of poisonous gas were destroyed. The treaty also strictly forbade all import into Germany of any weaponry or war material. Arms production in Germany fell under international control.

Germany lost 67,273 square kilometers, one-eighth of its territory, with a population of 5,138,000 people. Germany lost all her colonies. All merchant ships with a capacity over 1,600 tons' displacement were confiscated, as well as one-half of the merchant ships exceeding 1,000 tons' displacement, a quarter of the fishing fleet, and one-fifth of the river fleet. Germany was also required, for the next five years, to build for the Allies merchant ships, totaling 200,000 tons' displacement per year. Germany was obligated to supply France with up to 140 million tons of coal, Belgium 80 million tons, and Italy 77 million tons. Also, it was required to transfer to the winners half of its paints and non-military chemicals and to provide up to a quarter of the future production through 1925.¹ The Allies received the right to use German ports, railroads, and waterways on very beneficial terms. On top of all this, Germany was forced into paying astronomical amounts of retribution.

The Versailles Treaty was not only extremely unfair and degrading to Germany, it was ineffective and did not carry any basis for a lasting peace. The Versailles Treaty only contained the seeds of World War II. Lenin was the first to understand that World War I left a rocky legacy. The victorious allied nations, especially France, were carried away in demanding reparations from Germany. Forced into making huge payments to the victors, Germany faced a sharp economic crisis, and the German people experienced hunger, poverty, and constant misfortune.

Lenin was the first to understand that the Versailles Treaty was a bomb waiting to explode under Europe. Germany would never make peace due to the unfairness of the pact;

there would always be those who opposed the treaty, who would call out for revenge and act to get it. On October 15, 1920, Lenin declared: “The order held by the Versailles peace treaty lies over a volcano, since the seventy percent of the world’s people who are enslaved are anxiously awaiting someone to come and start a struggle for their liberation, and to rock the foundation of their countries.”²

Lenin did not know that this someone had already come. His name was Adolf Hitler. In September 1919 this someone joined the German Workers’ Party as number 007, and began the fight against the Versailles Treaty. This fight he called “My Struggle”—*Mein Kampf*.

In 1920 Russian Communists undertook a new attempt to spark a second world war by ripping through Poland into Germany. Although the most favorable conditions for revolution had already lessened, Germany in 1920 was still an acceptable place for class struggles. Germany was ruined and dishonored. All her ideals were besmirched and mocked. The country was enveloped in a harsh economic crisis; in March 1920 Germany experienced a general strike, estimated to have had more than 12 million participants. Germany resembled a powder keg, waiting for just one spark. The Red Army was supposed to bring this spark to Germany. The mood of the Red Army was reflected in its songs and marches. One of the most popular Soviet marches of 1920 included the words: “We’re getting Warsaw, Give us Berlin!” The contender for the unofficial march of the Red Army was another song of 1920 called “White Army, Black Baron,” which contained the famous verse:

Fanning the world fire,
We will level churches and prisons
Since from the vast taiga to the British seas
No one is more powerful than the Red Army.

In the summer of 1920, the western front of the Red Army, under the leadership of the ruthless General Mikhail Tukhachevski, began to advance with the objective of crushing Europe. Excerpts from order #1423 given to the western front on July 2, 1920, announced: “Fighters of the Workers’ Revolution! The fate of the World Revolution will be decided in the West. The path to the world fire lies over the dead body of White (anti-Communist) Poland. We will carry happiness and peace on our bayonets to the working people of the world. To the West! To decisive battles and thundering victories!”³

In the days when the Red Army was advancing toward the Polish cities of Warsaw and Lvov, a second congress of the Comintern was taking place in Russia. The Headquarters of the World Revolution then issued a call:

Brothers—Red Army Fighters, you should know your fight against the Polish slave drivers is the most just war in history. You are fighting not only for the interests of Soviet Russia, but for the interests of the whole of working mankind, for the interest of the Communist International. . . . Soviet Germany, united with Soviet Russia, will immediately become more powerful than all the capitalist powers combined! The Communist International declared that Soviet Russia’s goal is its own goal too. The international proletariat will not sheath its sword until Soviet Russia joins the Federation of the Soviet Republics of the World as an integral link.⁴

On July 23, 1920, directly from the Comintern congress, Lenin telegraphed Stalin at the Polish front: "Situation in Comintern is outstanding. Zinoviev, Bukharin, and I think that it would be proper to encourage a revolution in Italy. My personal opinion is that, to do so, Hungary has to be sovietized, possibly along with Czechoslovakia and Rumania."⁵ In a conversation with the French delegates to the congress, Lenin was even blunter: "Yes, the Soviet troops are in Warsaw. Soon, Germany will be ours. We will conquer Hungary again; the Balkans will rise against capitalism. Italy will tremble. Bourgeois Europe is cracking at the seams in the storm."⁶

The Red Army stepped onto Polish territory and immediately in the first occupied city declared the creation of the PSSR—the Polish Soviet Socialist Republic.⁷ Felix Dzerzhinski, the head of the Soviet secret police and an ethnic Pole, led the PSSR. By the end of the second congress of the Comintern, Warsaw was half surrounded by the units of the Red Army. Prior to the Polish counterattack, the Red Army crossed the Vistula River in the vicinity of the town of Włocławek—360 kilometers, or ten marching days, from Berlin.⁸

There was no common border between Soviet Russia and Germany. In order to spark the fires of revolution, it was necessary to tear down the dividing barrier—Poland. On September 22, 1920, Lenin spoke to the Ninth Conference of the Russian Communist Party and bluntly described the logic guiding the Bolsheviks in their drive: "The defensive war against capitalism is over, we have won. . . . We are now going to try to attack them, to help the sovietization of Poland. . . . We have set ourselves a task: to seize Warsaw. . . . It turned out that not just the fate of Warsaw is being decided, but the fate of the whole Versailles Treaty."⁹

To the Communists' misfortune, Tukhachevski, who did not understand strategy, was in command of Soviet troops. Tukhachevski's armies were crushed near Warsaw and fled in disgrace. In the critical moment, Tukhachevski lacked strategic reserves, and this decided the outcome of the grandiose battle. This time, Europe was fortunate. The Soviet Communists had to postpone the revolution in Europe until 1923.

3

The First Contact

If a revolutionary shake-up of Europe is to begin, it will be in Germany . . . and a victory of the revolution in Germany will secure the victory of the international revolution.

—JOSEPH STALIN, *WORKS*

The crushing of Tukhachevski's army in the summer of 1920 in Poland created unpleasant consequences for Russian Communists. The Russian people, whom the Communists, it seemed, had succeeded in drowning in blood and completely subordinated to their control, suddenly made a last-resort attempt to rid themselves of the Communist dictatorship. At that moment, Lenin and Trotsky were making preparations for a new world war. On December 22, 1920, Lenin advised his fellow party members: "We ended one line of wars, we must prepare ourselves for the second."¹ Lenin was ready for any sacrifice in the name of war: "We are severely lacking in everything, yet we are no poorer than Viennese workers. Viennese workers die, starve—their children also die, starve—but they do not have the most important thing that we possess: hope. They die, oppressed by capitalism, they find themselves in a position to make sacrifices, but their sacrifices are not like ours. We sacrifice for the sake of the war that we are waging against the entire capitalist world."²

However, the Russian people demanded peace, not world domination. St. Petersburg, the "cradle of the revolution," experienced one workers' strike after another. The workers demanded bread and freedom. The Bolsheviks crushed the workers' demonstrations, but in March 1921 all of a sudden the Baltic fleet intervened on the workers' behalf. The sailors of the seaport city of Kronstadt (a naval base), the same ones who gave power to Lenin and Trotsky, now sought their freedom from Communist rule. They demanded that the Soviets (the workers' and peasants' councils, the basic organizing units of society created by the Communists) be purged of Communists. In addition, the nation experienced a wave of peasant uprisings. In the forests of the Tambov region, peasants formed an anti-Communist army—well organized, but poorly armed.

The peasants' and sailors' uprisings and the workers' demonstrations were crushed by the same man who lost the Polish war, Mikhail Tukhachevski. He showed inhuman cruelty, and disregarded all international rules of law and human rights. Under his leadership thousands of hostages were executed by firing squad, peasants were shelled with poison gas, and villages were burned. Villagers were drowned in swamps; sailors were drowned, pushed into holes cut in the ice.

Communist leaders were desperately looking for a way out of the crisis. The Comintern, finding itself in this desperate situation, made a decision that the only thing that could save Bolshevism was a revolution in Germany. The head of the Comintern, Grigori Zinoviev, sent his loyal follower, the Hungarian revolutionary Bela Kun, to Berlin. Kun, who in 1919 had been the actual head of the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic, arrived in Berlin in March 1921 with an order from Zinoviev and the Executive Committee of the Comintern to the Central Committee of the German Communist Party to seize power. For this the German Communists had to organize an immediate uprising and abolish the Weimar Republic.

On March 22 a general strike was declared in the industrial regions of central Germany. On March 24 the Communists took control of government buildings in Hamburg. In Leipzig, Dresden, Chemnitz, and other cities of central Germany, the Communists organized a takeover of courts, municipal buildings, banks, and police headquarters. The official organ of German Communists, *Die Rote Fahne*, openly called for revolution.”³

Walter Krivitsky, one of the most highly positioned chiefs of Soviet intelligence, who took part in the events, wrote: “We were sent to Germany for reconnaissance, mobilization of dissident elements in the Ruhr region, and preparation of workers for an opportune moment to start an uprising. We immediately formed three types of organizations in the German Communist party: an intelligence and reconnaissance service, acting under the supervision of the Fourth Directorate of the Red Army; military formations to serve as the core of the future Red Army of Germany; [and] small fighter squads, whose orders included lowering the morale of the *Reichswehr* (German Army)”⁴ (The intelligence officers of the German and all other Communist parties worked under the leadership of the Fourth Directorate of the Red Army. The Fourth Directorate, after changing its name several times, subsequently became known as the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces, or GRU.)⁵

Although the attempt to take control of Germany in 1921 suffered defeat, in Moscow preparations immediately began for a new seizure of power in Germany and the world. On December 30, 1922, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was born. In this name there are no national or geographical limits. According to the plans of the founders of the USSR, the Union was meant to spread throughout the world. The “Declaration of the Founding of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics” proclaimed that the USSR is only the first decisive step in a creation of the World Soviet Socialist Republic. The number of republics was planned to expand until the entire world formed one giant Communist state. The Founding Declaration of the USSR was an open and direct declaration of war to the rest of the world. This was an official document that stated the main purpose of the existence of the giant state: to destroy and subordinate all remaining states of the world.

The coat of arms of the USSR contains an image of the globe with symbols of Communism superimposed upon it. On the day of the formation of the USSR, a member

of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Sergei Kirov, proposed to build a “Palace of the Soviets.” Kirov explained: “This building must serve as the symbol of future might, the victory of communism not only here, but also there, in the West.” He emphasized that the palace must be built for the purpose of holding the ceremony of acceptance for the final republic into the Soviet Union. At that time, nobody could forecast which republic in particular would be the last to come into the Union of Soviets—the Argentine Soviet Republic or the Uruguay Soviet Republic—but the Soviet Communists were certain that this moment would inevitably come.

Attempts to unleash a war and revolution were repeated by the Soviet Communists many times over. There was an attempt to start a “Balkan revolution,” and obtain, in Trotsky’s words, a direct route from the Balkan region to the ports of France and Britain.⁶ An assassination attempt was made against the Bulgarian Tsar Boris, but miraculously he survived. In September 1923 armed uprisings began in Bulgaria, started on the Comintern’s orders. On September 27, 1923, the Soviet Politburo ordered ten Bulgarian Communists (officers and pilots) to the navy base in Sevastopol. If a nearby Bulgarian city close to the shore was in rebel hands, the pilots would establish a connection by airplane between the south of Russia and Bulgaria. Then, “upon the establishment of the connection, to send out arms that have been in Sevastopol since last year, prepared for the Bulgarian revolution . . . and . . . send Bulgarian Communists currently in Moscow and other Russian cities to Bulgaria with arms.”⁷ The leader of the uprisings was Georgy Dimitrov—future head of the Comintern. Attempts were also made to spark revolutions in South America, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, China, India, and many other countries.

However, Germany remained the ultimate objective. One of the several attempts to take power in Germany is especially interesting. This attempt was undertaken in the fall of 1923 when Lenin no longer participated in the leadership. The reins of power were almost completely in Stalin’s hands, although neither the country, nor the world, not even his rivals within the party, had come to understand this. Stalin’s personal secretary, Boris Bazhanov, described the preparations for seizure of power in Germany: “At the end of September an emergency meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party of Bolsheviks (the former name of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—the CPSU, as it was renamed in October 1952) was held, so secret that it was attended only by the members of the Politburo and myself. No regular member of the Central Committee was permitted to be present. This meeting was called in order to fix a date for a coup in Germany. It was decided on November 9, 1923.”⁸

Bazhanov wrote that the funds earmarked to support the German revolution were tremendous, and a decision was made to support the effort without limits. Inside the Soviet Union, all Communists of German origin and all Communists who knew the German language were mobilized. They were trained and sent to Germany for underground work. Not only regular Soviet Communists were sent to Germany, but leaders of higher rank as well, among them the People’s Commissar (member of the cabinet of ministers of the Soviet government) Vasily Schmidt, the members of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party Karl Radek and Grigory Piatakov, the candidate for membership to the Politburo of the Communist party of the USSR Nikolai Bukharin, and many others. In 1923 many others, also under aliases, arrived in Germany: Tukhachevski, Unshlikht, Vatsetis,⁹ Menzhinskii,¹⁰

Trillisser,¹¹ Yagoda,¹² and many others. The Soviet ambassador to Germany, Nikolai Krestinski, formed a powerful web of secret intelligence. The Soviet embassy transformed itself into the headquarters of the revolution. Through it orders were passed from Moscow, along with a flow of funds, which were immediately transformed into a storm of subversive propaganda, arms, and war supplies.

The Comintern commission dealing with German affairs consisted of the entire Soviet leadership: Stalin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Bukharin, and Radek. Stalin thought that it was necessary to avoid at all cost anything that might reveal that the revolution was “dictated” or “instigated” by the USSR. The plan was simple: November 7—the anniversary of the Communist takeover in Russia—would be the day for workers’ demonstrations of solidarity in Germany. Special units, trained in Moscow by Communist secret police and military intelligence under the supervision of Joseph Unshlikht, would act as *provocateurs* and incite conflicts with police. Their goal was to cause violent clashes and arrests thus inflaming the anger of the workers. On November 8, the clashes were to grow from street fights into more serious threats. On the night of November 9, Unshlikht’s units were to seize the most important government establishments, making it appear to be a spontaneous reaction of the masses against police brutality.

The script was simple, yet reliable. The so-called “Great October Socialist Revolution” followed the same script; so did the “proletarian revolutions” in Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia in 1918 and in 1940. Following this blueprint, Communists took control of many states after World War II: a “spontaneous demonstration” of workers, the wrath of the people—and small units of cunning professionals.

The difference was that in the German revolution of 1923 the Communists had reliable allies: the Nazis. At this point in time, the German Workers’ Party already had a new name—it was the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP was the German acronym)—and it had a new Fuehrer: Adolf Hitler. “A slogan of the Comintern was: ‘War on Stresemann [the chancellor and foreign minister of Germany]’¹³ and Poincaré [the prime minister of France]!’¹⁴ A slogan of the Nazis was: ‘War on Poincaré and Stresemann!’ There had even been talks between Radek and certain leaders of the Nazi party.”¹⁵

Karl Radek was a member of the Executive Committee of the Comintern and a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR. He had been to Germany several times with the goal of triggering a revolution. In 1919 he was arrested by German authorities, but was quickly sent home. In 1923 he once again returned to Germany. Could any of the Nazi party leaders conduct talks with the member of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, Comrade Radek, without having Hitler’s express consent for doing so? And could Karl Radek conduct talks with Nazi leaders without a direct order from Stalin? It is remotely possible that Radek acted on his own but, knowing Stalin’s obsession with control, it is highly unlikely. Stalin told the Central Committee that “[a] German committee of the Comintern, consisting of Zinoviev, Bukharin, Stalin, Trotsky, Radek, and a number of German comrades, adopted a number of specific decisions dealing with the direct assistance to the German comrades in [the] task of seizing power.”¹⁶ Radek expressed an open enthusiasm for Hitler’s storm troopers and said: “We can see on the faces of German students wearing brown shirts the same devotion and the same inspiration which shone on [the] faces of Red Army officers.”¹⁷ Radek praised the storm troopers as “great guys,” adding: “You will see that they will fight for us, lobbing hand grenades.”¹⁸

Let's examine the dates. In August of 1923, Stalin decided that "German Communists, by themselves, will have to seize power in Germany." After this, in October, high-ranking Soviet officials were sent to Germany, and one of Stalin's agents conducted talks with the Nazis and discussed cooperative actions. In other words, the Soviets were saying on the one hand, "Dear Nazis, please help the Communists take power in Germany." On the other hand, they were saying "Let the Communists rule Germany by themselves."

This is a familiar Communist maneuver, and it was Stalin's personal trademark. Communists took power in Russia in alliance with other parties. Then they destroyed their allies after they became useless. Stalin personally acted in the same fashion. He eliminated his political adversaries by using his allies, and then eliminated the allies.

The Communist and Nazi parties did attempt a joint takeover in Germany in 1923. Communist propaganda wants us to believe that in 1923, there was no conspiracy between Communists and Nazis. However, on November 8, 1923, in Munich Hitler and a group of armed followers tried to arrest the government of Bavaria. Hitler declared that the revolution had begun, that the Bavarian and Weimar governments were demolished. A new "government" was formed immediately. On the night of November 8, a group with Ernst Roehm at its head took control of the headquarters of the military district.¹⁹ Attempts to take over other infrastructure and government facilities were put down by the army and the police. On November 9 Hitler proclaimed a demonstration of his supporters. A clash occurred between the demonstrators and the armed police; sixteen of Hitler's supporters and three police officers were killed.

The attempted takeover was crushed by force. Hitler and his closest associates fled, but were soon captured, stood trial, and were sent to serve prison terms in the Landsberg fortress. It was from this prison cell that Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*. Later, when he came to power, Hitler declared his fallen associates national heroes, and named the dates of the rebellion, November 8–9, as the most important German national holiday. An interesting note: the book *Mein Kampf* is dedicated to Hitler's sixteen fallen comrades, killed on November 9, 1923. But in the huge text (the first volume alone consists of almost six hundred pages in small print) Hitler writes nothing about the events of November 8–9. Hitler wrote the book in a prison cell, but does not mention why and how he came to be behind bars. For some reason, Hitler conceals all that preceded these events. Instead of a detailed explanation, the last page briefly states: "I will not venture here into discussions about events which led us to November 8, 1923." That is all.

This seems strange. The book is titled "My Struggle," and the author describes himself, his party, and his struggle for influence over the masses and for power. The events of November 8–9, 1923, are the culmination point of this struggle, after which Hitler's party was outlawed and he was imprisoned. At the time Hitler wrote his book, nothing more important had happened in his life or in the life of his party than the events of those two days. And yet he omits a description of these most important events.

In fact, he had something to hide. Hitler's failed revolution coincided in a most peculiar fashion with the failed Communist revolution. There are several coincidences, and they are astonishing. The date of the revolution was set in Moscow and kept under the utmost secrecy. But Hitler decided to conduct his coup on the same day, under the same red flag, shouting the same slogans calling for the expropriation of non-workers' income, the nationalization of industrial conglomerates, and the confiscation of German industrialists' war profits. Hitler's

tactics completely paralleled the ones Moscow dictated to its agents: conduct demonstrations despite bans on such actions, provoke clashes with police forces, and seize government buildings. There was a total convergence of goals, methods, place, and time down to the hour and minute of the act.

Even stranger, Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin believed in plots, coups, and the seizure of power by a well-organized minority. This is precisely what they accomplished in Russia, and many times over tried to repeat in other nations of the world. Hitler had a different method. Hitler was a demagogue, an agitator. *Mein Kampf* is a tale of a leader of masses, who knows how to handle the crowds, how to win their trust and affection. *Mein Kampf* is a book about how to obtain power through legal means, but there is not a word in it, not a hint, about underground methods akin to those used by Lenin and Stalin. In the sphere of legal open struggle for power over the masses, Hitler was much stronger than Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin. But in the sphere of mutiny and plots Hitler was clearly weaker. He was not even prone to think in this direction. Ten years later, he came to power through legal means, through agitation, propaganda, and voting booths. Hitler's way was that of loud speeches and dramatic uplifting parades. He understood his full strength as an orator, and was proud of it.

Then why was Hitler in 1923 drawn to the Lenin-Stalin methods of taking power through armed conflict and at the same time as a coup staged by Moscow? For nearly a century, Soviet and East German historians have been telling us that this was merely a strange chain of coincidences. Sometimes this happened: Communists decided to stage a coup, and Hitler decided the same thing—on the very same day. In fact, Soviet Communists made attempts to use Hitler and his party for destabilizing the political situation in Germany long before Hitler's coming to power.

Stalin's Role in the Rebirth of German War Power

Only one country—Soviet Russia—can win in the event of an all encompassing conflict.

—ADOLF HITLER, DURING A MEETING WITH LORD HALIFAX,
THE BRITISH FOREIGN MINISTER, NOVEMBER 19, 1937

After World War I, Central and Western Europe were in such a debilitated state that a large war could not arise because no nation was capable of starting one. France was among the main victors. Under the terms of the Versailles Treaty, Germany paid huge reparations to France, and the French had no motive to start a new war in Europe. The main concern of the French government was to maintain the new existing situation in Europe as long as possible. French generals chose strictly defensive strategies. They built the Maginot Line along their border, fashioned after the Great Wall of China.

Great Britain was also among the victors. Great Britain had no claims on any territories in Europe. Therefore, Great Britain had no desire to see a new European war. Great Britain's interests included preserving the newly formed balance of power in Europe. Britain was at the center of the greatest colonial empire in history, and its main interests lay outside of Europe: to preserve its colonies. Great Britain had a powerful navy to defend its colonies and trade routes, and a relatively small army to defend the homeland and maintain order in the colonies. Even if the British government had the desire to start a new war in Europe, its army was insufficiently strong to do so.

Germany, according to the Versailles Treaty, was completely disarmed. The Versailles Treaty not only demanded that Germany pay dues, dues, and more dues to France, but it also forbade Germany to have, buy, construct, test, or produce any offensive arms, and strictly limited defensive arms. The remaining Central and West European nations could not unleash a large war because they did not have sufficient economic or military might to do so and, most importantly, they had no desire to do so.

The Kremlin leaders in this situation could have breathed a sigh of relief and completely devoted themselves to the building of a peacetime economy. In order to avert war in Europe,

all that was necessary was to make sure the Versailles Treaty was not breached, that Germany stayed disarmed and weak militarily. Germany was Russia's main opponent in World War I and her most likely opponent in any future conflict. Soviet Russia was not a signatory of the Versailles Treaty, but the pact did give Russia, which turned into the Soviet Union, invaluable advantages. The Soviet Union could produce any model of weapon or military technology. Meanwhile, Germany not only stood still in terms of military progress, it fell far behind.

The Kremlin leaders should have used all the powers of the Soviet diplomacy and intelligence services to uncover and root out all attempts to revive the German military machine. Let Germany stay weak! If Germany does not have tanks, aviation, heavy artillery, poison gases, submarines, if Germany has no trained panzer corps, pilots, navigators, if the German generals are banned from developing new tactics and methods of conducting operations, if German engineers do not have the ability to create new models of weapons, and factories do not produce these weapons—then Germany would never start a new war.

But the Kremlin leaders did not order their intelligence services to undertake a mission for the strict execution of and adherence to the Versailles Treaty. They did the opposite. A secret reorganization of the German army began with the help of the Soviet government. Moscow gave the German commanders all that they were forbidden to possess: tanks, heavy artillery, war planes, training classes, and weapons testing and shooting ranges. Germany was also provided with access to the Soviet factories that produced tanks and airplanes that were the most advanced in the world so the Germans would be able to look, to memorize, to copy. Stalin allowed the German government to create secret design bureaus and training centers on Soviet territory.

On November 26, 1922, an agreement about the production of metal airplanes and plane engines was signed with the German aviation firm Junkers Flugzeugwerke. It was this agreement with Junkers that paved the way for large-scale Soviet-German military cooperation. In July 1923 two new agreements were set out: one was about the production of munitions and military equipment and the other about the construction of a chemical plant. On April 15, 1925, an agreement was signed about the creation of a secret air force center in the Russian city of Lipetsk for training German military pilots. One hundred D-XIII-type military planes were bought by the Soviet government for Germans from the Dutch company Fokker. The preparations for the blossoming of the Third Reich's airpower had begun. Over the years, the German models Heinkel He-45, He-46, He-51, Arado Ar-64 and Ar-65, Junkers K-47, and Dornier Do-11 were successfully developed and tested in the USSR for the Germans. By the end of 1933, the school had prepared 450 fighter pilots, air reconnaissance observers, and members of bomber squads. Many of them later entered the core of *Reichsmarschall* Hermann Goering's command staff. It is safe to say that the Luftwaffe (the German air force) was born in the Soviet town of Lipetsk.

Nobody was supposed to know that Stalin was preparing Germany for a new world war. Planes, designed for training and testing, arrived by non-stop flights at high altitude.

All those Germans who headed to the German aviation school in Lipetsk were formally discharged from the *Reichswehr*. Their names were changed. The return of bodies of those who perished during the frequent training accidents was quite a challenge. They were sent by sea through Leningrad, in containers labeled "Mechanical Parts." Their relatives were not told of the true causes of death.

Stalin understood that the new war would not only be an air war, but a tank war as well. Therefore, he gave particular attention to preparing German Panzer corps. In 1926, near the Soviet city of Kazan, a tank school for the *Reichswehr* was created. German tankers wore Soviet uniforms there. Stalin fully equipped future German Panzer generals: he gave them tanks, fuel, ammunition, transport, housing, repair facilities, and a gigantic well-guarded weapons range—to create, to invent, to test. Kazan became the birthplace and alma mater of German armored divisions. The best Panzer generals of the *Wehrmacht Heer* (the German army) were bred and trained there. In Kazan they mastered the art of modern warfare; later, they led tank units to Warsaw, Paris, Belgrade, and Athens, to the shores of the English Channel, the Adriatic Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean.

It is critically important that engineers constantly work on improving weapons. A break of even ten years carries irreversible consequences. Old engineers and designers either leave for other branches of industry or retire, without passing their experience and knowledge to the new generation. In a few years a twofold problem arises: on the one hand, a technology lapse, on the other hand, the absence of competent and experienced engineers who could bridge this lapse. Fifteen years separate the end of World War I and Hitler's coming to power. Stalin's merit before Hitler's Germany lies in that he did not allow Germany to fall behind its enemies in technological and scientific advancement. Stalin bridged the gap between the retiring generation of engineers from the Kaiser era and the newly ascending generation of the Third Reich. Stalin's efforts secured the transfer of all amassed scientific and technological potential, knowledge, and experience from the retiring designers to the newly starting creators of military equipment and weapons.

The development and production of chemical weapons (poisonous agents such as mustard gas) were set up on the premises of the firm Bersol in Ivashchenko (now Chapaevsk) near the Soviet city of Samara. The daily output of mustard gas, which sadly earned its fame during World War I, reached 3.3 tons, and the daily output of the deadly poisonous gas phosgene was 2.6 tons. That made a total of 5.9 tons per day, which meant over two thousand tons per year. Joint testing of chemical weapons was conducted on two training ranges: one called "Tomka," near the city of Volsk in the Saratov region, and another, "Podosinki," which is today Kuzminki, a district of Moscow. It was there that in 1926–1927 the first joint Soviet-German chemical weapon tests were conducted.

It was not enough to train personnel and perfect models of weapons. One also needs military factories that will produce these weapons. Here as well the Kremlin leaders already, at the end of the 1920s, showed full understanding, and came to the aid of the German war industry. An agreement was worked out about the creation in Russia of production facilities for the German war industry, masked as Soviet-German enterprises. The Junkers deal was the first such enterprise. In 1922 the firm began constructing metal planes and plane motors. Beginning in 1924, the factory already had begun to produce several hundred planes per year. Following Junkers were Friedrich Krupp (cannons, shells, and tanks), BMW (tank motors and plane motors), Bersol (poisonous gases), Karl Walther (rifles), and others.

Stalin prepared Germany for a second world war. Without Stalin's help, Germany could not arm itself and destroy Europe. Obviously, when arming Germany, Stalin was not planning that all this would be used against him.

Why Did Stalin Like Hitler's Book So Much?

Germany's most evil enemy is and will always be France.

—ADOLF HITLER, *MEIN KAMPF*

A study of the war between Germany and the Soviet Union should start with the question: Why did Hitler invade? In 1924 Hitler wrote in his book *Mein Kampf*: “We want to return to that point, where our previous development halted six hundred years ago. We want to halt Germany’s constant efforts to expand to the south and west, and have our sights set towards the territories situated to the east.” This phrase became famous and has been quoted time after time. Politicians, diplomats, generals, historians, and journalists have tirelessly repeated these words. Even in the 1920s this quote was cited in the essays and public speeches of Soviet leaders. Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev repeated it. In the 1930s, especially after the Nazis came to power, Hitler’s frankness resounded with new authority. Any public speaker on the impending war began with this proclamation by Hitler.

After Stalin’s death in 1953, hordes of historians quoted Hitler and accused Stalin of short-sightedness. The Fuehrer openly declared his intentions. Stalin should have read *Mein Kampf* and taken appropriate measures. From the moment that *Mein Kampf* first appeared in 1925 until the moment Hitler invaded in 1941, this quote was repeated from every loud-speaker. It was shouted at factory meetings, it was used to scare the people. It was repeated by the Comintern and printed in schoolbooks. After all this, how could the German invasion have been a surprise for Stalin? Did Stalin himself read *Mein Kampf*?

Yes, he read it. Moreover, Stalin was the first foreign reader. He was its greatest scholar and fan. The first translation of *Mein Kampf* was into Russian, under Stalin’s personal orders. The book was published for the leadership of the party and the army. Marshal of the Soviet Union Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovsky wrote: “In our time we all read Hitler’s book *Mein Kampf*.”¹ The translation was completed without obtaining the author’s permission. But his royalties were paid, though not right away. At the moment *Mein Kampf* was published,

Stalin was not the only leader—there was a whole crowd of leaders in the Kremlin. Not all of them understood the meaning of Hitler's creation. Comrade Stalin, however, immediately grasped, weighed, and evaluated everything. After having strangled his competition, Stalin paid his due to the author of *Mein Kampf*.

The number of copies printed in Russian at that time is unknown to me. One thing is clear: the circulation was minimal. For those few copies of the precious book, Stalin paid generously. How much did he pay? Stalin gave Hitler power over Germany. "Without Stalin, there would have been no Hitler, there would have been no Gestapo"—so said Trotsky in October 1936 as he evaluated Stalin's aid to Hitler.² Without Stalin's help, Hitler could not have come to power. Yet even such an incredible fee seemed too little to the generous Stalin. On August 23, 1939, he presented Hitler with Poland, and the rest of Europe. If Stalin had not appreciated *Mein Kampf*, the political career of Adolf Hitler would have ended in 1933 with a crushing defeat in the elections.

Let us clarify the situation in the mid-1920s when Hitler's book first came to light. Stalin sat in the Kremlin; Adolf Hitler sat in the Munich brewery Hoffbrauhaus. Stalin was one of the leaders of the Soviet Union, he was first among equals. But already many people had experienced the stranglehold of Stalin's grasping hands.

Who was Hitler in 1925? He was a failed artist, a wounded soldier returned from the front. Hitler joined a small proletarian party, which marched under the slogan of Gottfried Feder, calling for world revolution with the words "Proletariat of all nations, unite!" This program was adopted by Hitler as the foundation for a movement that he soon came to lead. Hitler's party set before itself Communist goals: banning private ownership of land, putting workers in control of administration in factories, and nationalizing industry.

On November 8, 1923, a socialist revolution hit Germany. The revolution was organized by the Comintern, and carefully directed behind the scenes by Soviet intelligence officers and envoys from Moscow. Although the revolution failed, Hitler's socialist workers' party showed itself as a unified, though small, formation of German workers. Hitler personally led his comrades into police fire. Some of his followers perished; Hitler himself was wounded and landed in jail.

That is where he fell into heresy. Hitler wrote a book, in which he uttered those famous words about lands in the east. Lenin and Trotsky decided that for the sake of the happiness of people everywhere they needed to sacrifice the people of their own country, whereas Hitler decided that the opposite had to be done: for the sake of the happiness of his people, he was willing to sacrifice people of other nations. For example, conquer lands to the east for Germany, regardless of the consequences for the people inhabiting those lands.

Hitlerism could have been eliminated from the moment of its conception. Sending an idealistic murderer to Munich would not have been a difficult feat for Stalin. Nobody would have paid any attention to one socialist breaking the skull of another, a very common occurrence. How many people did Stalin eradicate? Why did he not touch Hitler? He could have easily broken Hitler's neck and burned down his brewery with all his followers inside. Stalin could also have simply not paid any attention to Hitler, and without Stalin's help, Hitlerism would have never blossomed. It would not have yielded bloody fruit. But Stalin chose a third path: multi-faceted aid to Hitler. Stalin paved the way for Hitler to come to power. Hitler's dreams about lands in the east would have remained the pipe-dreams of a Munich dreamer, if not for Stalin's gigantic help.

Stalin read *Mein Kampf* from cover to cover and figured out that the main goal Hitler set for Germany's future was not lands in the east, mentioned in only one phrase in the book, but in liberating Germany from the chains of the Versailles Treaty. Hitler made enemies within and outside Germany. Internal enemies were the Jews. Outside enemies were the French, and the Jews.

Stalin's tactic relied on doing everything with someone else's hands, eliminating one enemy with the hands of the other. "Stalin always found monkeys, who brought him nuts from the hottest fire." This was said by Robert Conquest.³ "Nobody could make his competitors knock heads like Stalin, always staying on the side and coming out superior to all." This was noted by A. Antonov-Ovseenko.⁴ To this, one must add that Stalin was the most ardent perpetrator of Lenin's mission: to "create a Communist society with the hands of our enemies."⁵

Only once we understand Stalin's methods can we understand why Stalin liked the Munich dreamer and his book so much. The answer can be found in Hitler's book, Chapter XIII: "We must take every point of the Versailles Treaty separately, and systematically make it clear to the broadest masses of the population. We must achieve an understanding among 60 million German men, women, and children, and make them feel the shame of this treaty. We must make these 60 million have a deep hatred for this treaty, so that their scorching hatred brings the will of the people together and evokes a cry in unison: GIVE US BACK OUR ARMS!"

That is precisely what Lenin dreamed of: "that someone would emerge, who would raise a struggle against the Versailles Treaty."⁶ This someone did emerge. Adolf Hitler raised a struggle against the Versailles Treaty, and against France. He demanded arms. Stalin put a sword in his hands. The link between the contents of *Mein Kampf* and Stalin's support for Hitler becomes clearer. The proclamation about lands in the east did not scare Stalin. *Mein Kampf* is against France, as can be read in Part 2, Chapter XIII: "We must understand the following to the end: Germany's most evil enemy is and will always be France." Also: "The task of the day for us is not the struggle for world hegemony. . . . France systematically tears apart our people and according to her plans strangles our independence. . . . We simultaneously hear protests and slogans against five or even ten different countries, and meanwhile forget that first of all we need to concentrate all our physical strength and mental powers to deliver a blow to the heart of our vilest enemy. . . . France will inevitably strive to make Germany into a weak and crushed nation. . . . At the current moment, our only enemy is France—that nation, which deprives us of our rightful existence."⁷ Further in the book, Hitler continues in the same spirit for many pages and chapters.

Lands in the east were not his immediate task, only a perspective for centuries to come. This opinion was adhered to not only by Hitler, but by all his immediate entourage: "Land must be taken not in Africa, but in Europe, before all in the East. This is the natural course for Germany's geopolitical development in the coming centuries."⁸ Defeating France, on the other hand, was Hitler's immediate task. Before taking lands in the east, Hitler needed to secure himself from his mortal enemy. Here is the second reason for Stalin's love of *Mein Kampf* and its author. Stalin knew that France was not only Hitler's main enemy, but it was a mortal enemy. Stalin understood that if Hitler tried to free Germany from France's economic slavery and from the Versailles Treaty, Britain would immediately interfere, because France imposed

the treaty in alliance with Britain. If Germany entered into war with Britain and France, other countries would be pulled into the conflict as well. This was just what Stalin needed.

It did not at all follow from *Mein Kampf* that Hitler would advance to the east. In *Mein Kampf* there is a mention of lands in the east, but no indication of when Germany needs to conquer those lands. Hitler simply “pointed his finger” in the direction. He even said (in Part 1, Chapter III): “The effort would have to be envisaged in terms of centuries; just as in all problems of colonization, steady perseverance is a far more important element than the output of energetic effort at the moment.” Hitler was planning to build a thousand-year Reich. Even in the famous, repeatedly quoted passage, he speaks of centuries: “We want to return to that point, at which our previous development stopped six hundred years ago.”

In order to return to that point, the Germans had to, as Hitler instructed, “halt the constant German push to the south and the west of Europe.” This, Hitler was unable to do. He was unable to do it because *Mein Kampf* contains an inherent fundamental contradiction. In order to advance east, it was necessary to stop moving west. On the other hand, in order to advance east, it was necessary to secure Germany’s safety from the mortal enemy, France, and first go west. One does not need to have Stalin’s insight—anyone can clearly understand that Hitler got confused in 1924. He set a trap for himself. He openly declared his intention to go east, making enemies out of all those to the east of him. Any German movement “towards the sun” could only go through Poland. Therefore, Poland automatically became Hitler’s enemy. And not only Poland: “lands in the east” is a very foggy concept. This declaration could have applied to anyone. If your neighbor proclaimed that he wants to rob you, would you like him? One phrase in his book transformed Hitler into a source of fear for all his eastern neighbors. This does not at all testify to his elevated mental capabilities.

It is not wise to disclose one’s political goals, if they are strictly criminal. It is not prudent to make enemies with one’s neighbors. But Hitler not only openly proclaimed his desire to advance eastward, he also declared that France was his mortal enemy. To this list he also added the Jews. Hitler’s heavy load of enemies broke the camel’s back.

The book *Mein Kampf* clearly demonstrated the arrival of a man who was going to fight against the world, the man whom the world was going to hate, the man against whom all people would rise up, the man the whole world would declare war upon. The entire world’s hatred would concentrate against Hitler and his followers. If Hitler unleashed a war, first and foremost this war would be against anyone but the Soviet Union. If Hitler unleashed a war, logic would demand the dissipation of German strength along the entire European continent, and beyond. Those who fought against Hitler would be considered saviors and liberators. This is exactly what Stalin needed. Stalin knew: if Hitler went to war against France and Britain, the question of lands in the east would fade on its own.

6

Industrialization and Collectivization

For us, Germany's "national liberation" lies not in a war with the West, but in a proletarian revolution encompassing both Central and Western Europe and uniting it with Eastern Europe as [the] Soviet United States.

—L. TROTSKY, "AGAINST NATIONAL COMMUNISM!"

In 1927, a Five Year Plan for developing industry was adapted in the Soviet Union. This began the industrialization, over-industrialization, super-industrialization. After the first, the second Five Year Plan followed, and then a third one.

We can judge the purpose of the Five Year Plans from the following fact. At the beginning of the first Plan, the Red Army had seventy-nine tanks; at the end it had over 4,538.¹ Nevertheless, the military accent was not so noticeable in the first five years. The main focus then was not on the production of arms, but on the creation of an industrial base, which later was to produce armaments.

The second Five Year Plan was a continuation of the development of the industrial base. This meant the creation of furnaces, giant electricity plants and oxygen plants, and coal ore mines. The production of arms was not yet the main objective although Stalin does not forget about it either; in the first two five-year intervals, 21,573 warplanes were produced.²

But it was the third Five Year Plan, which was scheduled to end in 1942, that had as its goal the output of hoped-for military production, in enormous quantities and of very high quality. Under Stalin, the Soviet Union truly attained grandiose achievements.

The first secret of the success: terror. Communists shut down the borders of the country; it was impossible to run away. Secret police unleashed a fight against "saboteurs." Any accident in a production line, any breakage, any lack of success was declared a result of an evil plot. The guilty (and the innocent) were imprisoned; the terms were quite lavish. Those who were named "malevolent saboteurs" were shot.

The terror had a dual effect. On the one hand, discipline improved, and any opposition was crushed. Now there was no need to fear strikes and demands for higher wages. On the

other hand, millions of people ended up in the concentration camps. This was a slave workforce. Inmates do not have to be paid at all. They can be sent anywhere. They do not need housing—a torn tent, wooden barrack that they build for themselves, or a hole in the ground that they will dig will suffice. Inmates can be almost never fed or clothed. Their lives cost nothing. They can be forced to work any number of hours in a day, without holidays. They can be executed for unfulfilled production quotas. The development of the remote regions of Siberia and the Far East would have been impossible without the multi-million-strong armies of the inmates (and the “special settlers,” in other words, those deported by force and exiled to those remote regions). The government planned in advance the number of prisoners that would be needed for the next year, and would place an advance order for the arrests with the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD).

The second secret of Stalin’s industrialization success: vast resources available in the USSR. Over a thousand years of its history, Russia had amassed an enormous treasure. The country had huge gold reserves. In churches, monasteries, museums, tsarist palaces, and the homes of rich people, mind-boggling valuables were collected: icons, paintings, statues, medals, books, antique furniture, furs, and jewelry. All this was mercilessly confiscated and sold abroad. Stalin sold enormous reserves of gold, platinum, and diamonds to the outside world. In just a few years, Stalin sold all that the nation had been gathering for centuries. Stalin robbed churches and monasteries, the imperial vaults, and museums. Icons and precious books, paintings by great Renaissance masters, collections of diamonds, and the treasures of museums and libraries were all exported.

On top of all this, Russia has every sort of natural resource and in almost inexhaustible quantities. Millions of people were cutting down forests and transporting the timber to the northern ports. The timber was the base of exports. Stalin also organized gold mining on a never-before-seen scale. Among others, a group of concentration camps was formed under the name “Dal’sstroy” (the Russian abbreviation for “Far Eastern Construction Trust”). Jacques Rossi, a Frenchman, spent almost half of his life in Soviet concentration camps. He wrote a remarkable encyclopedia, now known as *The Gulag Handbook: An Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Soviet Penitentiary Institutions and Terms related to the Forced Labor Camps*. Here is how he described this group of camps:

Dal’sstroy is the most powerful and almost autonomous kingdom in the GULAG Empire. Dal’sstroy was founded in 1932–1933 on the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk, [at] the mouth of the river Kolyma. The main task was obtaining gold. Local forests, coal, and other resources were exploited only for the internal needs of Dal’sstroy. All work was done by the inmates, including the construction of villages and towns for the freely employed, construction of thousands of kilometers of roads, barracks for inmates, etc. By the early 1940s, Dal’sstroy stretched a length of 1,300 km from north to south, and 1,700 km from east to west, encompassing the western part of Kamchatka and eastern Yakutia. Dal’sstroy was not subordinate to the local administration.³

Starting in the late 1930s and all the way into the beginning of the 1950s, several hundred thousand inmates were mining up to 100 tons of gold a year for Stalin.⁴ In 1939, just Dal’sstroy by itself mined 66.7 tons of gold on Kolyma. The plan for 1940 was for 80 tons of gold. And the production of gold kept on growing. For comparison’s sake: In tsarist Russia,

the maximum production of gold was 64 tons, in 1913; average annual gold production in the world in 1930–39 was 803 tons. Therefore, just the Kolyma camps were providing Stalin with 12 percent of the world's gold production.⁵

Siberian and Far East gold was the golden key to the success of industrialization. But Dal'stroy was not the only place where gold was mined. Stalin also paid for foreign technology with coal, nickel, manganese, petroleum, cotton, and also with lumber, caviar, and furs. In 1930, the main Soviet export became grain. They managed to get 883 million gold rubles for the exported grain. The sales of oil and oil products and also timber and timber products produced another 430 million gold rubles. Capitalists paid almost 500 million gold rubles for flax and furs.

Later on, because of grain overproduction in the United States, world grain prices dropped. In 1932–33, the overall revenue from grain sales, at very low “dumping” prices, was only 369 million gold rubles. In 1933, the revenue from grain sales was only 8 percent of overall export revenues. Even half of the grain sold during 1932–33 would have been enough to save all of the country's regions from starvation.⁶

Millions of slaves of communism fulfilled the first Five Year Plan, while at the same time the United States experienced an unprecedented economic crisis, which spread to Europe. The crisis gave additional impulse to Stalin's buildup. Finding themselves in the midst of the Great Depression, inventors and businessmen in America, Germany, Great Britain, and France sold technology at low prices. Fortunately, Stalin had plenty of gold in reserve. Western technology was the main key to success. In the beginning of the 1930s, the USSR became the world's biggest importer of machinery and equipment. The People's Commissar of Heavy Industry, Sergo Ordzhonikidze, declared with satisfaction: “Our plants, our mines, our factories are now equipped with such outstanding technology that no other country has. . . . Where did we get it from? We bought from the Americans, from the Germans, from the French, from the British the most advanced technological achievement and then outfitted our enterprises.” And then he added, with a dig: “They, themselves, still have their plants and mines equipped with nineteenth- and early twentieth-century equipment.”⁷

American engineers traveled to the Soviet Union and designed factories, while Stalin's slaves dug pits, poured concrete roads, and erected walls. Right away, cranes, tools, and equipment came from abroad, and the foreign engineers mounted, set, and tested all this. In the early 1930s, to the amazement of the entire world, in the city of Nizhny Tagil sprang up the most powerful industrial enterprise in the world—Uralvagonzavod (the Ural Railroad Car Factory).

Americans talk with deserved pride of the giant factory which they designed and built not in America, but in the Soviet Union. During the course of six decades, until the very crumbling of the Soviet Union, Uralvagonzavod remained the largest enterprise in the world (the Guinness book of world records confirms this). Uralvagonzavod was built in such a manner that it could at any moment switch from producing railroad cars to producing tanks. In 1941, an order was issued to produce tanks, and Uralvagonzavod without any delays began mass production. During four years of war, Uralvagonzavod produced 35,000 T-34 tanks. It also produced other weapons.

The Chelyabinsk tractor factory was also built in the Urals at the same time. It also was built according to American designs and fully outfitted with American equipment, and it also was built in such a way that at any moment it could stop producing tractors and instead begin

producing tanks. During the course of the war, this factory was called Tankograd. It built not only the medium T-34 tanks, but also the heavy IS and KV classes.

Not far away, in Sverdlovsk, a third gigantic factory was built—Uralsmash. This factory is among the top ten engineering factories in the world. In order to supply these giants in the Urals, the net of steel-casting factories was greatly expanded. A city of metallurgists—Magnitogorsk—was built, as well as a huge plant, the main output of which was steel armor.

The Urals were not at all the only center of tank building. In Stalingrad, a tractor factory was built, which also on the surface was designed for producing tractors but in reality was for producing tanks. At the same time, automobile, motor, aviation, and artillery factories were being erected. The most powerful aviation factory in the world was built in the Far East. In order to service the factory, the city Komsomolsk-na-Amure was built. This city was a complement to the factory. Both the factory and the city were built according to American designs and furnished with the most modern American equipment. The scope of construction in Komsomolsk astounded even the American engineers, who were there to install the equipment.

Modern factories were built in the Soviet Union, but the lives of the people were not at all improving as a result. The most ordinary pots and pans, rubber boots, plates, the simplest furniture, cheapest clothing, nails, and matches—all these became scarce. Huge lines formed outside the stores. Stalin was paying for industrialization with his people's standard of living, letting it drop very low.

Stalin had one more ace: spies. The West supplied Stalin with the most contemporary industrial equipment, and sold licenses for production of the newest models of weapons and military technology. But all that could not be obtained by legal means was stolen by Stalin's spies. Stalin was generous with his gold when it came to spying.

In order to raise the productivity of his scientists and engineers, Stalin imprisoned entire collectives of engineers, accusing them of being spies. Prominent aviation, tank, and artillery engineers found themselves behind bars. Among them was S. O. Korolev—the future inventor of the first artificial satellite to orbit Earth, N. N. Polikarpov, A. N. Tupolev, R. L. Bartini, V. M. Myasishev, V. M. Petlyakov, and thousands of others. The task set before them was simple: create the best bomber (tank, cannon, engine, and submarine) in the world and you will receive freedom; fail and you will go to Dal'stroy to extract gold; the inmates there do not live too long. Imprisoned engineers did not have to be paid millions for their work, they did not need good houses or apartments, and there was no need to send them to resorts by the warm sea: without all this, they were still very interested in creating the best weapons in the world on very short deadlines. These were talented people; on top of talent, Stalin's spies supplied everything that was created by the best minds in the world. Every imprisoned engineer had before him the best American, German, British, and other designs in the given field. He could choose the best, and based on it create something even more remarkable.

Immediately after the Communists seized power, the land was divided among the peasants. Land was divided rather fairly—according to the number of mouths to feed, meaning the size of area a family received depended on the number of its members. Millions of Russian peasants dreamed for centuries of receiving land. Now their dreams had finally come true, but resulted in a widespread famine across the land. The cause for this was that the Communists gave people the land, but demanded everything the peasants could grow to be given back to the government. The land is yours, but all that you can grow on it is not yours.

It is understandable that nobody wanted to voluntarily give up the fruits of his labor. In answer to this, Communists created “food regulation” brigades and entire armies—units of armed men who took away from the peasants all their reserves. The peasants answered with armed resistance, but they failed.

In the struggle for bread the Communists won, but they celebrated their victory too soon. It is possible to take away from the peasant all his bread, his potatoes, to lead away his cows and to slaughter his pigs; however, it is impossible to force a man to continue working hard. The Russian peasants stopped growing agricultural products since the Communists were taking away what they produced. This resulted in the horrible famine of 1920–21.

Lenin was forced to retreat from his rigid politics. Free trade of foodstuffs was allowed; the gold ruble was introduced. All this was called by the term NEP—New Economic Policy. There was nothing new in it. It was good old capitalism. The country was revived almost immediately. By 1923, there was so much produce that Russia was once again able to export grain. Then, in 1927, Stalin began his industrialization. This process brought on consequences that were not foreseen by the Communists. The country had huge reserves of produce, but peasants were in no rush to sell them. The reason was simple: over several years, hardworking peasants had hoarded significant reserves of gold rubles. They went to the shops in search of manufactured products, but there was nothing to buy. Practically all industrial production in the Soviet Union focused on the military. There were tanks, airplanes, parachutes, cannons, shells, cartridges, and machine guns, but no home appliances. What does a man need cash for, if there is nothing to buy? The peasants once again either stopped selling products or stopped producing them.

The Communists now faced a dilemma: either direct a part of production to producing goods for the wealthy peasants to consume or get rid of the wealthiest, meaning the most hardworking, the smartest. Rather than return to normal human existence and end communism, Stalin chose to enslave the peasants on collective farms and eliminate private ownership. In 1928, Stalin began the bloody war against peasants, which was called collectivization.

Units of the Red Army encircled entire regions. Those peasants who produced more than others were, in the middle of winter, herded together with their families into railroad cattle cars and transported across thousands of kilometers to Siberia, the Urals, or Kazakhstan, where they were thrown out into the cold on the bare steppes. This grandiose operation was initiated on Stalin’s orders and executed by his rising deputy Molotov. Many years later, Molotov was asked how many people were transported to the wild, uninhabited regions during collectivization. He answered: “Stalin said that we relocated ten million. In reality, we relocated twenty million.”⁸

Historical literature and documentary sources offer different numbers of the demographic losses resulting from the collectivization and starvation of 1932–33. Presently, the following figures look most justified: 3.5 to 5 million people perished from famine, and about 3 to 4 million people died at the places of exile as a result of intolerable conditions of repression and unbearable life. Cannibalism flourished in the country. Stalin, meanwhile, during these horrible times was selling millions of tons of grain each year to accumulate currency in order to produce weapons in mass quantities.⁹

7

Stalin's Role in Elevating Hitler

If Russia makes peace, this peace will only be temporary. The Socialist Revolution in Russia will only win when it is surrounded by a ring of sister Socialist republics. A peace made with imperialist Germany would only be an episodic phenomenon. It will provide a short break, after which war will boil once again.

—G. ZINOVIEV, *COLLECTED WORKS*

The year 1927 was when Stalin finally secured and firmly established his place atop the power structure. From this moment, Stalin's attention was concentrated not only on fortifying his dictatorship, but on issues of the Communist movement and the World Revolution. Stalin needed victory in Europe, especially in Germany. For this, he needed to eliminate three obstacles that were preventing the German revolution. Stalin had to bring order to the German Communist Party and force it to execute orders coming from Moscow, establish common borders with Germany, and destroy the German Social Democrats.

Stalin understood better than anyone else that revolution comes as a result of war. War heightens tensions, ruins economies, and brings nations closer to the fateful limits, beyond which their ordinary existence ceases to be. In matters of war and peace, he adhered to this principle: if the Social Democrats, with their pacifism, divert the proletariat's attention from revolution and from war that gives birth to revolution, then merciless war must be waged against the Social Democrats. On November 6, 1927, Stalin sounded the slogan: "It is impossible to finish off capitalism without finishing off the Social Democrats."¹ In the following year, Stalin declared war on Social Democrats to be the main task before the Communists: "First of all, a tireless struggle against Social Democrats on all lines . . . including exposure of bourgeois pacifism."² Regarding those who wanted war, for example regarding the "German fascists" (Communists did not call them "Nazis" because they did not want their people to know about the "socialist" and "worker" aspects of the name of Hitler's party), Stalin's position was clear and rigid: they must be supported. Let the fascists take care of the pacifists and Social Democrats; let them start a new war. Everyone knows that what follows a big war is revolution.

In 1927 Stalin foresaw the Nazi takeover in Germany, and considered this development desirable: "Precisely the fact that the capitalist government is turning fascist is leading to a heightening of tensions within the capitalist countries, and to revolutionary actions by workers," Stalin told the Central Committee in 1927.³ Stalin gave Hitler's regime the name "terrorist dictatorship" and stressed that "the revolutionary crisis will increase faster [since] the more the bourgeoisie gets confused in its combinations and tactics, the more it employs terrorist methods." In his report to the Seventeenth Party Congress, he stressed: "I speak not about fascism in general, but about fascism of the German type."

In 1925, Stalin declared that World War II was inevitable, as was the Soviet Union's entrance into that war. "There can be no doubt that a war in Europe will start and they will all fight in it."⁴ But Stalin did not want to start the war himself, or to be its participant from the first day: "We will have to enter, but we will enter last, we will enter in order to throw in our weight and tip the scale."⁵ The more crimes Hitler committed in Europe, the better for Stalin, the more reasons Stalin had to send the Red Army to liberate Europe.

For Stalin's strategy to be implemented Hitler needed to secure an absolute majority of the votes in the German parliamentary elections. He could not do this alone. On July 31, 1932, Hitler's party amassed 13.7 million votes in the elections to the *Reichstag* (German parliament), 37.3 percent of the total number of votes—the peak for the Nazi party, after which its popularity began to decline. However, this was not enough for an absolute majority. In the following four months, Hitler lost 2 million votes. The decline continued, and gained momentum. The breakdown of the votes for the major German political parties on November 6, 1932, when the emergency *Reichstag* election took place, was as follows:

Hitler's party (NSDAP)—11,705,000
 Social Democrats—7,231,000
 Communist Party—5,971,000

Hitler's National Socialist Workers' Party faced a crisis. At first glance, Hitler seemed to be the winner and the most popular politician in Germany, and therefore should have taken power. However, he did not have an absolute majority, and could not take power. But combined, the Social Democrats and the Communists had more votes. Hitler's National Socialist Workers' Party was in a deep financial crisis as well, its funds diminishing fast. Goebbels wrote in his diary: "All hope has disappeared. . . . There is not a pfennig in our cash boxes. . . . Nobody gives us any credit. . . . We are on our last breath." Goebbels's entry on December 23, 1932, said: "I am overwhelmed by a terrible feeling of loneliness, which borders on a sense of total loss! The year 1932 was a sequence of one misfortune after another. It should be erased completely. . . . We have no prospects, no hopes left." The terrible position the Nazis found themselves in was no secret to outside observers. By New Year's Eve, the powerful newspaper *Frankfurter Zeitung* was already rejoicing at the "disintegration of the NSDAP myth." Harold Laski, one of the leading intellectuals of the English left, was assured that: "The day when the National Socialists presented a lethal danger has passed. . . . If we discount chance, it is not so improbable that Hitler will finish his career as an old man in some Bavarian village, telling tales to his friends in the evenings in some beer hall, about how he once almost orchestrated a takeover in the German Reich."⁶

Facing bankruptcy, Hitler, as recorded in Goebbels's diary, considered two options: the first was flight, the other was suicide. Ten years after the crisis, Hitler himself told his inner circle: "The situation was at its worst in 1932, when we were forced to sign many debt obligations in order to fund our press and election campaigns, and keep the party running. . . . In the name of the NSDAP, I signed for these obligations, knowing that if the NSDAP stopped functioning, everything was lost."⁷ At the end of 1932, Hitler's time would be up, and he would be finished as a politician. For the time being he was still the most popular political figure in Germany, but his party was in deep debt, and running out of money. German National Socialism faced doom until Hitler was saved by Stalin.

Comrade Stalin did not just save Hitler; he handed him the keys to power. Democracy is structured in such a way that, during the turning points of history, minority groups play the key roles. This occurs because history has innumerable possible courses and outcomes. When everything goes well, people agree with the leaders' course of action, but during times of crisis alternative ideas and plans arise. Policy alternatives split the nation almost evenly between two diametrically opposed views. In such a situation, a third party—a minority—becomes the kingmaker, and its role can be decisive.

In 1932 Germany experienced precisely this situation: Hitler was in first place, the Social Democrats second, and the Communists third. But none of the three could control the absolute majority needed to come to power. In this case, Germany's fate, and the fate of Europe, was in the hands of the German Communists. If the Communists sided with the Social Democrats, Nazism would perish and never again resurface. If the Communists turned against the Social Democrats, Social Democracy would crumble.

For the Communists, forming a coalition with the Social Democrats meant defeating Hitler. After this victory, the Communists would automatically rise from third place to second, and share power with the first-place party, the Social Democrats—a very appealing option.

The Communists had a second option: to go against the Social Democrats, thereby opening the way for Hitler to take power. The consequences of such a move were very predictable: Hitler, having come to power, would throw both Social Democrats and Communists into concentration camps. If the German Communists went against the Social Democrats, they would be sentencing to death both themselves and the Social Democrats.

Acting on Stalin's orders, the German Communist leaders chose the second option—they did not wish to form a block with the Social Democrats. Publicly, for regular Communists and workers, the Communist Party policy against the Social Democrats was explained with twisted reasoning: there is no radical difference between a regime of parliamentary democracy and a fascist dictatorship. Both are forms of dictatorship by the bourgeoisie, which was growing more and more reactionary. The German Communist leaders kept repeating, after their Moscow masters, that a fascist-like turn taken by the bourgeois parties and their Social Democrat supporters was even more dangerous than the Nazis because the Social Democrats hid their true motives. German Communist leaders told the workers: We are Communists, struggling against capitalism and fascism, while the Social Democrats are acting as protectors of capitalism, and are becoming *de facto* allies of the fascists. Therefore, the Social Democrats are really nothing more than a "left wing" of fascism, or they are "social fascists," a party which conducts a policy of "hidden fascism" that is more dangerous than Nazi policy. The peace-loving policy of the Social Democrats prevents war; therefore it prevents revolution

and, ultimately, prevents the victory of the Working Class, while the Nazi policy enhances the chances for war and revolution and, ultimately, the victory of the Working Class. From this bizarre dialectic, they concluded that Hitler's party must carry out the main attack on the Social Democrats, since they were the most dangerous enemy, which still retained some influence over the worker class and hindered an effective war on capitalism.

Hitler came to power as a result of this perverted ideological mind game. German Communists, out of instincts for self-preservation, should have joined a coalition with the Social Democrats. But Stalin intervened and opened the way for Hitler. The first time there was open cooperation between the Nazis and Communists was in August 1931 in Eastern Prussia, where the Social Democrats were in power. The Nazis initiated a referendum to oust the Social Democrats. At first the Communists were opposed to the referendum. However, after instructions from Moscow, they changed their minds. The Nazis and Communists joined forces under a common red flag, on which the swastika and the hammer and sickle were intertwined. Despite the Communists' calling the plebiscite a "Red Referendum" and the Nazis "working people's comrades," the referendum failed to gain a majority.

A year later, several days before the November 1932 elections for the *Reichstag*, a public transportation strike began in Berlin. The Communists and Nazis jointly coordinated the strike. Storm troopers and *rotfronters* (Communist paramilitary) paralyzed public transportation for five days, dug up tram tracks, picketed, beat up those who came to work, and used force to stop the cars that the authorities managed to put to work.

Once the Nazis came to power, Stalin used all his might to push them toward war. When Germany attacked Poland, and France and Britain entered the war against Germany, Stalin ordered the Communists of the Western democracies to oppose the war. The Western democracies were branded as capitalist imperialists, and the Comintern ordered its members to weaken the armies of the Western democracies through strikes in armament and airplane factories. The Communist Parties were to demand an end to the "imperialist war." Hitler was portrayed as a fighter for the working classes. But by pushing Hitler into conflict with democratic Europe, Stalin had issued Hitler a death sentence. By offering to divide Poland with Hitler, Stalin had dragged him into a larger scale war with no end in sight. Stalin expected that the Western allies and Germany would exhaust their strength by fighting against each other as they did in World War I. The struggle between Hitler and the Western democracies would create the moment for a "mighty strike" from the East and bring forth world revolution on the bayonets of the Red Army. Five years prior to the Nazis' rise to power in Germany, Stalin had already planned their annihilation: "[We will] crush fascism, destroy capitalism, establish Soviet power, and liberate the colonies from slavery."⁸

Stalin and the Destruction of Soviet Strategic Aviation

Given the existence of a massive invasion army, the main task of the air force is to support the advancement of this army, for which all forces must be concentrated.

—BRIGADE COMMANDER ALEXANDER LAPCHINSKY, *THE AIR ARMY*

Stalin could have averted World War II with one stroke of his pen. He had many such opportunities. Here is one of them: In 1936, the Soviet Union developed the heavy high-speed, high-altitude bomber TB-7 (later renamed Pe-8). Here are reviews of it:

Air Force Major General P. Stefanovsky, test-pilot of the TB-7: “The multi-ton ship surpassed in its flight capabilities at an altitude of ten kilometers all the best European fighters of its time.”¹

Air Force Major General V. Shumikhin: “At altitudes above 10,000 meters the TB-7 could not be reached by the majority of existing fighters at that time, and the ceiling of 12,000 meters made it untouchable even by anti-aircraft artillery.”²

Airplane designer V. Shavrov: “A remarkable airplane. It was on the TB-7 that the first five-ton bombs were lifted, earlier than in the United States or in England.”³

Professor L. Kerber: “This machine had a strong defense system consisting of 20-mm cannons and 12.7-mm heavy machine guns. Bombs of the largest caliber could fit in the large bomb compartment. . . . [It was] unreachable at maximum altitude of its flight by anti-aircraft cannons and fighters of that time. The TB-7 was the most powerful bomber in the world.”⁴ “A record-setting plane. . . . Now, we have every reason to assert that the TB-7 was more powerful than the American flying fortress B-17.”⁵

Historians agree with such appraisals. John V. R. Taylor: “At heights of 26,250 to 29,500 feet its speed surpassed the speed of German Me-109 and He-112 fighters.”⁶ Vaclav Nemecek: “This machine had an incredibly long life. In the fifties, one could still encounter [some of] these planes on polar routes, where they were used for transporting cargo.”⁷ There is no need to prove that only good planes live and fly for such a long time.

The remarkable qualities of the TB-7 were demonstrated to Western experts in the spring of 1942, when the arrival of a Soviet delegation headed by Molotov was awaited in the

United States and in Britain. It was thought that the only possible route was through Siberia and Alaska. But Molotov flew on a TB-7 from Moscow to Britain over occupied Europe. One must remember who ruled the skies above Europe in the spring of 1942, in order to appraise the level of trust of Soviet leadership in this airplane. Molotov did not fear landing on the defendant's bench in Nazi court, and Stalin did not fear letting Molotov fly. The TB-7 proved itself. It flew over all of Europe, stopped in Britain, flew to America, and returned by the same route, once again flying over German holdings undisturbed.

After the war, a commission of the Soviet government conducted an analysis of the German anti-aircraft defenses at the time of Molotov's flight. It turned out that, along the flight path, German fighters did not go up to intercept the enemy aircraft, there was no alert sounded at the anti-aircraft batteries, the observation posts did not register the flight of the TB-7 at all. Simply put, the German anti-aircraft defenses not only could not take down the TB-7, they could not detect its presence in their air territory.

Colonel (at that time, Captain) E. Pussep, who flew a TB-7 over Germany many times (not only with Molotov's precious self, but with other cargo), recounted: "The anti-aircraft guns reach at such altitudes with hardly any aim, if at all. A fighter plane at such height can act only like a sleepy fly. Who can do anything to me?"⁸

So, long before the war the Soviet Union had created an untouchable bomber, and a government order was prepared to produce a thousand TB-7s by November 1940. What remained to be done? All that was left to do was to sign the order with seven letters: J. STALIN.⁹

When the first TB-7s flew at unreachable altitudes, engineers in other countries of the world still had problems with the unseen barrier of height: in thin air, engines lost their power from a deficiency of oxygen.¹⁰ They literally suffocated, like mountaineers at the summit of Mount Everest. One possible way of increasing the power of engines existed: to use exhaust gases to rotate a turbo-compressor, which supplies the engine with additional air. This was simple in theory, difficult in practice. In experimental trials, in record-setting airplanes, this was successful. But in series models, it was not.

Components of the turbo-compressor work in a hot stream of corrosive gas at a temperature of over 1000 degrees Celsius when the surrounding air is minus 60 degrees Celsius, and then return to the warm ground. Uneven heating and rapid changes in pressure and temperature ruined the parts, and the sound of the turbo-compressor drowned out the roar of the engines. Protective paints and coatings burned during the first flight and, when back on the ground, moisture settled on cooling engines, and corrosion ate through the mechanisms. The bearings had the worst fate: they melted, like wax candles. On a trial plane, if out of ten attempts one time the turbo-compressor doesn't break, good. But what is one to do with the mass production airplanes?

Everyone searched for the solution, but it was discovered by Vladimir Petliakov, the creator of the TB-7. Petliakov's solution was kept as a top government secret. The TB-7 had four propellers, and from the outside appeared to be a four-engine plane. But inside its body, behind the crew cabin, Petliakov installed an additional fifth engine, which did not rotate any propellers. At low and medium altitudes, the four main engines were engaged, and at high altitudes, the fifth was switched on and brought into action the system of a centralized supply of additional oxygen. Using this oxygen, the fifth engine fed itself and the four others. That is how the TB-7 could climb where no other plane could reach it. With it, one could fly over Europe, bomb any object, and not worry about its own safety.

With a thousand untouchable TB-7s, any invasion could have been averted. All that had to be done was to invite delegations of certain countries and in their presence somewhere in a remote steppe drop at least one thousand tons of bombs from astounding altitudes.¹¹ Then follow up with an explanation: This has nothing to do with you, this is a surprise we hold for the capital city of that country which ventures to attack ours. Precision? There is no precision. Why would there be? We drop the bombs from incredible heights. The lack of precision will be corrected through repeated drops. Every day several hundred tons will rain on the capital of the aggressor, until we reach the desired outcome, and then other cities will get a taste of this hailstorm as well. Do you understand what will happen to the opponent before he has a chance to reach Moscow? The TB-7 is untouchable when in the air, and cannot be attacked by the opponent on land: our bases are hidden far from the borders, and our probable enemies have no strategic aviation to speak of. . . . And now, gentlemen, let us drink to eternal peace.

Such a speech could have been given by Stalin's diplomats, if the Soviet Union had several hundred or even a thousand TB-7s. But Stalin decided not to build a thousand TB-7s. Is it possible to understand Stalin's motives? Yes, it is possible.

If we compare a thousand TB-7s to a game of chess, this situation is the equivalent of being able to declare checkmate to the opponent's king before the start of the game, and if the partner still ventures to play, one can call checkmate after his first move. If one thousand tons of bombs, which several hundred TB-7s could deliver in one trip, are to be translated into contemporary strategic terms, it is equivalent to one kiloton. This is the language of the nuclear age. If one kiloton is insufficient, in two sorties twice this amount can be delivered. Twenty kilotons equals what (without much precision) was dropped on Hiroshima. A thousand TB-7s is like a nuclear missile, aimed at the enemy's capital. The power is such that, for a potential aggressor, war loses all sense.

Some argue that during the course of the war the British and American strategic aviation dropped many more bombs on Germany, without being able to bomb her into surrender. This is true. However, these were bomb raids during the course of the war, when it was too late for Hitler to ask for mercy. A different story would have been to demonstrate such power to Hitler and his generals before the war, and warn them that if they started a war all this would fall on their heads. In that case, Hitler personally, or those surrounding him, would have thought twice about the consequences of their actions.

In the late 1930s Stalin had the capacity to create an instrument that would serve as a severe warning to Hitler. With one stroke of Stalin's pen on an order to produce a series of TB-7s, the German invasion of Soviet territory could have been averted. Of course, in August 1939 Stalin could not have had a thousand TB-7s. But he could have had two, three, four, or maybe even five hundred. If only Stalin had in due time signed an order for the serial production of the TB-7.

To do him justice, it must be noted that Stalin did sign such an order—but then he canceled it. And signed it again! And repealed it again, and again. Four times the production of TB-7s started, and four times it was canceled.¹² After each order, the industry had time to put out three or four TB-7s, and then the order was reversed. Everything started anew, and once again was interrupted. By June 22, 1941, the TB-7 series was not in production. In the four attempts, the aviation industry had time to issue and give over to the air force not a thousand TB-7s, but only eleven. Moreover, almost all of the eleven planes lacked the most

important detail—the fifth additional engine.¹³ Without it, the best strategic bomber of the world became an average commodity. After Hitler's invasion, the TB-7 series was resumed in production. But by then it was too late.

A question arises: If Stalin had issued the order to produce a thousand TB-7s and did not cancel it, could the Soviet industry have fulfilled such an order? Could it have put out, by the end of 1940, a thousand such airplanes? The creator of the TB-7, Vladimir Petliakov (after Petliakov's tragic death the TB-7 was renamed Pe-8), did not doubt this for a minute. Alexander Mikulin, creator of the engines for the TB-7, was completely certain that Soviet industry could meet such a demand. Professor L. Kerber, the deputy to the airplane designer A. Tupolev, and experts in the air industry S. Eger, S. Leshchenko, E. Stoman, chief engineer of the factory that produced the TB-7s I. Nezval, head technologist of the factory E. Shekunov, and many others on whom production of the TB-7 depended—all thought the task could be accomplished by the designated deadline. Airplane designers V. Shavrov and A. Tupolev held that one thousand TB-7s could be ready by November 1940.

The confidence of the engineers and leaders of industry is understandable: the TB-7 was not being built just anywhere. Russia is the motherland of strategic bombers. I say this with pride and without irony. At the beginning of the twentieth century, when the entire world was flying on single-engine planes, Russia was the first in the world to start producing twin-engine airplanes. The world did not have the time to fully appreciate this advancement, when the great Russian engineer Igor Ivanovich Sikorsky built the first four-engine heavy bomber Ilya Murometz in 1913. The Murometz was unrivaled in terms of armament, bomb capacity, and range for several years. It had the best navigation system, bomb-aiming sight, and the first electrical bomb release mechanism in the world. For defense, it had eight machine guns, and there had even been an attempt to install a 76-mm cannon on board. In 1914, Russia became the first country in the world to create a unit of heavy bombers—a squadron of air ships.

When the Communists took over the country, Igor Sikorsky found himself among the exiles. However, Russia's technological potential remained large, and development continued. Despite the terror, despite the Communist burden, Russia continued to be the leader in the area of heavy bombers. In 1925, the design bureau of A. Tupolev created the TB-1, the first entirely metal bomber in the world, also the first monoplane with a cantilever wing. The rest of the world at the time still built wooden biplane bombers. The test trials of the TB-1 yielded two world records. In a short time, 216 TB-1s were built—another record.¹⁴ Russia had more heavy bombers than all the other nations combined. As the planes were built, more and more squadrons, regiments, and brigades were formed.

In 1930, Tupolev put out an even more powerful bomber—the TB-3, the first four-engine monoplane with a cantilever wing. The TB-3 was the largest of all airplanes in the world, both military and passenger. Such planes were unseen not only in production, but even in blueprints. Tupolev, in 1933, had already begun experimenting with refueling the TB-3 while in flight. The TB-3 set several world records, including high altitude flights with cargos of 5, 10, and 12 tons. The design of the TB-3 became a basic model for this class of airplane for many decades to come. The plane was assembled with astonishing speed, which reached three TB-3 models per day.¹⁵

Soviet industry broke its own records—in a short period it put out 819 TB-3s. Air regiments and brigades were no longer enough. On March 23, 1932, the Soviet Union be-

came the first country in the world to create a heavy bomber corps. In January 1936, the first aviation army was created, a second army in March, and a third aviation army a bit later. No other nation at the time had either an aviation army or even a corps of strategic aviation. A fleet of a thousand heavy bombers is a strategist's dream, and this dream materialized first in the Soviet Union. Generals and politicians of all nations disputed the doctrine of the Italian air power theorist General Giulio Douhet, a strong proponent of strategic bombing.¹⁶ Only Stalin did not argue.

But that is not all: the plans were for rearming three aviation armies with the newest bombers and additionally deploying three more armies in the Byelorussia, Kiev, and Leningrad military districts.¹⁷ While the TB-3 was "learning to fly," while it was being "put on its wings," approximately ten design bureaus were already engaged in fierce competition to receive the order for the newest strategic bomber, which would come to replace one thousand of Tupolev's TB-1s and TB-3s. Tupolev himself proposed the eight-engine Maxim Gorky. Only one model was built as a show piece to be flown over parades, awing the crowds with its dimensions. Maxim Gorky crashed in 1935, after a mid-air collision with a small escort plane. Thirty-seven people—the passengers and crew of both aircraft—died. A conspiracy theory has arisen alleging that the pilot of the escort plane deliberately rammed the Maxim Gorky because he believed Stalin was aboard.

Pavel Sukhoi proposed a one-motor long-distance bomber, the DB-1, with an incredibly large wingspan. The DB stands for *Dal'nyi Bombardirovshik*, which means "long-distance bomber." This plane (under a different name) completed several flights across the North Pole to America. America greeted Soviet pilots as heroes, not understanding that they were running tests of an experimental bomber. Sergei Kozlov proposed a twelve-motor "Ghigant" (Giant), capable of lifting several tens of tons of bombs, and of delivering to the enemy's rear paratroop divisions complete with any heavy artillery, including tanks.

Bolkhovitinov proposed a heavy bomber, the DB-A. Though it looked like a new airplane in design and description, it is a remodeling of the TB-3. This is a classic example of how a new airplane can be created with minimal expenditures, at the same factories that produced the old models. The DB-A broke four world records. It was the newest plane, but it could be produced by the same factories that put out the TB-3, without rebuilding the assembly lines, without changing equipment, without disrupting the established production flow, without retraining workers and engineers—in short, without the usual reduction in output and even without the need to retrain pilots, technicians, or engineers. If time was an issue, it was possible to launch a series of DB-As and fully renew the strategic aviation fleet by the start of World War II. But then a new, true miracle appeared—Petliakov's TB-7. The TB-7 eclipsed all other models.

By the time the TB-7 appeared, production of heavy bombers was as perfected in the Soviet Union as Henry Ford's production of automobiles had become in the United States. Changing a model is usually a difficult process, but it is simpler than creating a new model from scratch. During those horrible years, when millions died of hunger, the Soviet Union was first in the world in production of heavy bombers. Then, when the economy had somewhat improved, the country suddenly voluntarily backed away from its first-place position in this field. When no one threatened the nation, it took bread from dying children to continue to build heavy bombers. But when Hitler appeared nearby, and war came within sight, the production of heavy bombers was halted.

The question is not whether or not there would have been enough time to build a thousand TB-7s before the beginning of the war. The question is: why did they not try?

By the time the TB-7 came onto the scene, the Soviet Union had created design bureaus capable of creating airplanes that were ahead of their time, and an industry capable of a mass output that surpassed the demand of peacetime. Air academies, pilot schools, and technical schools were opened, the theory of military use was developed, and combat experience was obtained in local conflicts and grandiose training exercises. Air bases, learning centers, and test sites were built; personnel from command staff to machine-gun operators, from navigation officers to engineers to photo-decipherers were trained. Pilots, meteorologists, aviation medics, and others were all ready. Collectives formed, traditions were born, theorists and practitioners were raised.

After all this, the country that was the leader in the field of strategic aviation entered World War II without strategic aviation. On Stalin's orders, in November 1940, the Soviet air armies were disbanded. On June 22, 1941, Soviet strategic aviation did not have any armies in its ranks. Only five corps and three separate divisions remained. They were mostly equipped with the DB-3f, which is a magnificent bomber, but not a strategic bomber. They also still had TB-3s, which could be used to transport cargo, but as bombers they were obsolete. As we already know, there were only eleven TB-7s, not even enough to outfit one squadron.

It seems that there was no situation in which the TB-7 would become superfluous. If Stalin planned to avert World War II, he needed the TB-7. If Stalin decided to allow Hitler to unleash the world war, and planned to himself remain neutral, the TB-7 would be very needed, as a guarantee of neutrality. If Stalin planned defensive war, troops should have been ordered to dig themselves into the ground, as was done later on near Kursk. He needed to barricade the borders with impassable minefields from sea to sea, and while the enemy would be gnawing through our defenses, let the TB-7 fly at unreachable altitudes and ruin German economic power. In a defensive war, the TB-7s were needed. Stalin's resources were unlimited, while Hitler's were limited. Therefore, if the war started, it was to Stalin's advantage to draw it out: a war of attrition was deadly for Germany. In order to exhaust the enemy's resources more quickly, Stalin needed strategic bombers to weaken the military and economic potential of the enemy. There could be no better instrument for such a task than the TB-7.

The fate of the TB-7 disproves the legend that Stalin feared Hitler. If he was afraid, why not order the TB-7? The more he feared, the more planes he should have ordered. The reader should agree with me that when at night we fear walking across a cemetery, we pick up a stick. The more we fear, the bigger the stick we pick up, and we swing it menacingly. Stalin, on the other hand, had to be coaxed into picking up a stick. His personal advisor, airplane designer Lieutenant Colonel General Alexander Yakovlev, testifies that the chief of an R&D Center of the Air Forces, Major General A. I. Philin, was not afraid to prove to Stalin, in the presence of many, the necessity of producing a series of TB-7s.

Arguing with Stalin was tantamount to suicide. "Philin demanded, a few others supported him. In the end, Stalin conceded, saying: 'OK, let it be your way, though you have not convinced me.'"¹⁸ This is one of those cases when Stalin allowed the issue of TB-7s. Soon after, Stalin changed his mind and repealed his order. Once again, some brave souls began to argue and plead with him. The question is: Why was it necessary to prove to Stalin this plane's usefulness? If we all understand the indisputable advantages of the TB-7 and the need for its production, why could not Stalin understand such simple facts? If everything boils down to

Stalin's stupidity, the TB-7 would have been forbidden with one blow, and Stalin would not have returned again and again to the question. But Stalin changed his mind eight times. Why these doubts?

Exterminate millions of the best peasants, feeders of Russia? Order given—and the murderous collectivization starts. Purge the command staff of the army? No problem. Sign a pact with Hitler? No doubts. Stalin rarely had doubts. Repealing the order to build the TB-7 was the most difficult decision Stalin made in his lifetime.

The TB-7 had powerful enemies, and it is time to name them. The General Staff of the Red Army was formed in 1935. Before the German invasion the post of Commander of the General Staff was occupied in succession by Marshals A. I. Egorov and B. M. Shaposhnikov and Generals of the Army K. A. Meretskov and G. K. Zhukov. All of them were opponents of the TB-7. Other opponents of the TB-7, and of all strategic bombers, included many important aviation generals, including P. V. Rychagov, F. K. Arzhanukhin, and F. P. Polynin. The People's Commissar for Defense Marshal S. K. Timoshenko also opposed the TB-7. Airplane designer A. S. Yakovlev, Stalin's advisor on questions of aviation, was an avid opponent. And, of course, almost all Soviet military theorists, starting with V. K. Triandaphillov, were opposed to strategic bombers.

The best of all arguments against heavy bombers was put forward by a professor, Brigade Commander Alexander Nikolaevich Lapchinsky, the leading Soviet theorist of air warfare. He wrote several brilliant works on the theory of military aviation. His ideas are simple and understandable. Bombing cities, factories, and sources and storages of strategic resources is good. But it is even better to take over all this and use it to enhance one's own might. It is possible to transform the enemy's country into a smoking heap, but is it necessary? Bombing roads and bridges is useful in any situation except one: when we are preparing an invasion into enemy territory. In that case, bridges and roads should not be bombed, but taken over intact, without allowing the retreating enemy to use or to destroy them. Bombing cities drastically lowers the morale of the local population. This is true, who would argue with such a fact? But a forceful advancement of our troops toward enemy cities demoralizes the population more than any bombing. Lapchinsky recommended to Stalin to direct all efforts of the Red Army not toward undermining the military and economic capabilities of the enemy, but toward taking them over. The Red Army's objective was to destroy the opponent's armies. The objective of Soviet aviation was to open the road to our armies and support their rapid advancement.

Lapchinsky recommended not declaring a war, but starting a war with a sudden crushing attack by Soviet aviation on enemy air bases. The suddenness and power of the strike needed to be such that in the first hours it would destroy all of the enemy's aviation, without letting it leave the ground. Having destroyed the enemy's aviation on the ground, we would open the road for tanks, and advancing tanks in their turn would "level the enemy air bases." The target for our aviation should not be city districts, not electric plants and factories, but the enemy airplanes on the ground, the hidden machine gun hindering the advancement of our infantry, the column of trucks with fuel for enemy tanks, the anti-tank cannon hiding in the bushes.

In other words, one should bomb specific targets, many of them mobile. Bombing should take place not in the enemy's rear, but in the closest tactical space, on the front lines. For such work, one needs a light, maneuverable plane, whose pilot can use it to come close

to his target, recognize it, and hit the enemy precisely without hitting his own troops. The bomber is not needed. One needs a plane that either dives from heights or comes to the target in a hedgehopping flight, barely missing the treetops.

If we plan to blow up the neighbor's house, we need a crate of dynamite. But if we plan to kill the neighbor, and take over his house, we do not need the dynamite; we need cheaper, lighter, and more precise tools. Lapchinsky recommended to Stalin a different tool: a light bomber or a low-flying attack plane. A strategic bomber flies from faraway stationary bases and covers great distances, while the Soviets needed a plane that would always be nearby, could land on any dirt airfield, could easily change bases following advancing divisions, and could immediately fulfill the requests of tankers. They needed a light plane, whose pilots could themselves see the situation and instantly react to changes, contributing to the successful outcome of a quick and decisive battle.

Vladimir Petliakov, aside from the heavy four-engine (or rather five-engine) TB-7, created another plane—a small, twin engine, fast, maneuverable dive-bomber, the Pe-2. This was exactly what Stalin needed. Stalin decided: "Build two-motor ones, as many as possible."¹⁹ Was it not possible to build heavy and light bombers simultaneously? "No," said Lapchinsky, "impossible." All resources, all efforts had to be concentrated on achieving the central goal: obtaining full air superiority through a sudden attack on enemy air bases. If such a strike was delivered, there would be no need to bomb cities and factories. Stalin allowed the production of both types of airplane for a long time, but then understood that he must choose one or the other. He made his choice.

If we cannot grasp Stalin's iron logic, it is easier to declare Stalin insane. But let us look at Hitler. He is also an aggressor, and that is why he also has no strategic aviation. Hitler prepared a lightning takeover of France, and needed to take over and safeguard bridges rather than bomb them. German tank divisions needed the bridges for quick advancement. Paris also did not need to be bombed. Paris, with all its treasures, would go to the victor. Hitler did not need to destroy the shipyards of Brest, the tank and artillery factories of Cherbourg, Chaumont, and Bourges, the airplane factories of Amsterdam and Toulouse. They would be needed to strengthen the military might of the Third Reich!

For the blitzkrieg, Hitler needed aviation, but the type that would destroy French planes on the ground and paralyze, through sudden strikes, the French system of military command, not the type that destroys cities and factories. He needed aviation that would open the way for tanks and secure the quickness of their thrust toward the ocean. He needed aviation that hovered over the battlefields, fulfilling the requests from the tankers; aviation that struck not on giant areas, but on concrete targets. For the *Blitzkrieg*, he needed a small dive-bomber that carried a light load, but bombs precisely: a single-engine Ju-87, or a dual-engine Ju-88.

Later, the war changed its course and turned from a quick war into a war of attrition. New cities inaccessible to Hitler's tanks became targets—London, Cheliabinsk, Bristol, Kuibyshev, Sheffield, and Magnitogorsk. Here, Hitler would not have minded having strategic aviation, but he did not have any.

Lapchinsky's ideas, written long before Hitler came to power, were used by Stalin. Not in 1941, as was planned, but in 1945. Stalin's Pe-2 dive-bombers and low-flying attack planes Il-2 suddenly attacked Japanese airbases, and Soviet tank units entered Manchuria. It was an easy victory. When Japan was bled to death by fighting in the Pacific, and the first A-bomb was dropped, Stalin conveniently struck from the rear and seized Manchuria, creating the

conditions for Mao's victory in 1949. Soviet paratroops landed in Chinese cities not to destroy bridges, roads, and factories, but to prevent their destruction. In such a war there was no work for strategic aviation.

In the 1920s and early 1930s, Stalin needed strategic aviation so that nobody could hinder him from building Soviet military and economic power. In the second half of the 1930s, Stalin more and more leaned toward the scenario of a war that would result not in the destruction of Germany, but in its takeover. In November 1940, Stalin fully decided to accomplish against Germany what he would in August 1945 accomplish against Japan.

Stalin's Preparations for War: Tanks

Germans were surprised to discover that it was practically impossible to stop the Red Army's KV tanks.

—ROBERT GORALSKI, *WORLD WAR II ALMANAC, 1931–1945*

Stalin's goal was to develop and mass-produce the best tanks in the world. Tanks were to be the spearhead for the Soviet offensive against Western Europe, and Stalin set about developing them as he built Soviet industry.

In 1933, the Red Army adopted the T-28 tank. A variation of this model was designed in 1937—the T-28 PKh (*Podvodny Khod*—"underwater traversing" tank). Tests showed that if necessary, all series of T-28s could be converted to cross water barriers underwater, at a depth of up to 4.5 meters and width of up to one kilometer with a stream speed up to one m/s (meter per second).¹ Not a single German, British, American, French, or Japanese tank from the 1930s could compete with the T-28 in terms of weapons, armor, or engine power.²

At the end of 1937, the Germans started producing the Pz-IVA, the most powerful German tank of the first half of World War II. It had 15-mm armor.³ The T-28's armor was of higher quality and twice as thick—30 mm. This most powerful German tank had a 250-horsepower engine. The T-28's was twice as powerful: 500 horsepower. The German tank had two machine guns, while the T-28 had four or five. The gun on the German tank was approximately equal to the Soviet one. The T-28 had a 76-mm KT-28 gun, while the German tank had a gun of slightly smaller caliber—75 mm; therefore, the shells were slightly lighter. The T-28 fired shells with an initial speed of 381 m/s. The German Pz-IVA had a slightly longer barrel (16.5 caliber); therefore the speed of the shells was slightly higher—385 m/s. Thus the muzzle energy of both guns was practically the same. Soviet designers could not reconcile themselves to the fact that the Germans had caught up with them at least in one parameter. In response, starting in 1938, the Soviet T-28 tanks were produced with a new L-10 gun. Its barrel length was 26 calibers. The muzzle velocity of its shells was 555 m/s. The Germans did not

catch up with this innovation until 1942. The L-10 Soviet tank gun in 1941 was unrivaled in Germany or anywhere else in the world. "In terms of arms, the T-28 absolutely surpassed all German tanks. The L-10 gun (as well as the KT-28, by the way) could effectively destroy the tanks of the *Wehrmacht Heer* at distances out of range for their weapons."⁴

The Germans installed the HL-120TR 300-horsepower engine on the later models of their most powerful tank, the Pz-IV. But they still did not catch up with the Soviet 500-horsepower engines. The Germans enhanced the armor to 30 mm. The Soviet response was the T-28 E, with a maximum thickness of 80 mm. The T-28 had sufficient allowances in its design to permit the installation of the 85-mm F-39 gun with a 52-caliber length.⁵ The tank successfully passed all tests with that gun model. However, at that time, the Soviet tank industry made another breakthrough: it created the T-34. Its classic design became the sire of the future development of tanks worldwide. Further modernization of the T-28 was unnecessary.

After the war, Soviet generals and historians called the T-28 obsolete. But the T-28 was obsolete only by Soviet standards, only compared to the T-34. In comparison with all foreign tanks, the T-28 was still outstanding. If in the summer of 1941 a foreign tank had had a 76-mm gun with muzzle velocity of 555 m/s and four or five machine guns, it would have been the national pride of that country. But nobody had such a tank. If a foreign tank had had a frontal armor of 80 mm, it would have been considered an outstanding design achievement.⁶ If anyone in the world in 1941 had had a 500-horsepower tank engine, this would have been a world record. The "obsolete" Soviet T-28 was a combination of three world records, each of which even taken independently would have been the national pride in any other country.

After the war, the Soviet historians excluded all T-28 tanks (and many others) from the statistics, and put them in the "obsolete and worn-out" category. However, the "obsolete" T-28 tanks captured by Finland in 1939 and 1941 were used by the Finnish army, served until the very end of the war, and were successfully used against the Red Army. One of the "worn-out" T-28s was remodeled into an evacuation vehicle and served until 1951. By the way, there were no spare parts for these tank models in Finland. But the T-28 was designed in such a way that even without spare parts it served for several years in a war in terrible climates, almost impassable terrain, against a powerful enemy—the Soviet KV and T-34 tanks. And it even served six years after the war.

On December 19, 1939, the Red Army enlisted in its ranks the T-34. Following are German reviews of its performance. General Field Marshal von Kleist said: "Their T-34 was the best in the world." Major General von Mellentin agreed: "We had nothing equal to the T-34." General Field Marshal von Rundstedt also thought that the T-34 was the best tank in the world. Colonel General Guderian remembered: "A large number of T-34 tanks were used in battle [Guderian is referring to the hostilities in October 1941 near Mtsensk, northeast of Orel], causing significant losses among our tanks. Previously existing hardware superiority of our tank forces was now lost and shifted to the opponent. Therefore, a prospect for rapid and continuous success disappeared."⁷ "Our 50-mm and 37-mm anti-tank guns were completely useless against the T-34."⁸

Lieutenant General Westphal admitted: "The arrival of Soviet weapons that surpassed the German ones in quality was a very unpleasant surprise. One such weapon was the T-34 tank, against which the German anti-tank weapons were powerless."⁹

Infantry General Blumentritt agreed with his colleagues: "In 1941, the T-34 was the most powerful of all existing tanks. . . . In the vicinity of Verei, the T-34 without any hesitation penetrated the positions of the 7th Infantry Division, reached the artillery positions and literally squashed the guns. One can imagine what kind of impact it had on the morale of the infantry. The so-called 'tank phobia' started."¹⁰

I could endlessly quote German soldiers, officers, generals, and even field marshals; entire volumes of rave reviews of the T-34 have been published. Its debut caused a sensation at the beginning of the war. Sixty years after the T-34 first appeared, British professor Richard Ogarkovets, world famous as the leading authority in the field of designing armored technology, believes that the world tank-building industry still remains fully under the influence of ideas incorporated into the design of this remarkable tank. The T-34 was the only tank in the world created before the beginning of World War II that was not obsolete by its end. The T-34 fought for decades after World War II. Not a single other tank in the world had such a long lifespan.

The arrival of the T-34 surprised both Stalin's enemies and his allies. Leading British historian and military theorist B. H. Liddell Hart said: "None of our tanks could compare with the T-34." French General G. Bouche recounted: "The arrival of the T-34 tank, significantly superior to German tanks, greatly surprised the Germans." German officers demanded the production of exactly the same tank. However, as Guderian explained, Germany, the homeland of Rudolph Diesel, could not design a sufficiently powerful diesel engine for tanks. Moreover, it was impossible to deliver the needed raw materials for the steel-casting industry to Germany and, as a result, during the war Germany was incapable of producing alloyed steel of the same quality as the Soviets.¹¹ The lack of alloy compounds in Germany resulted from the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Stalin knew what he was doing on August 23, 1939. By supporting German aggression in Poland, Stalin made Germany the enemy of Britain and France. The blockade of Germany by the British fleet and the resulting shortages of many raw materials was an inevitable consequence.

The T-34 was armed with a 76-mm long-barrel gun, designed by Vasily Grabin (the barrel was 41 calibers). It was the most powerful tank gun of its time. If the T-34 had had no distinctions aside from this gun, it would still have been considered the best tank in the world, because it could destroy the most tanks of its kind. But the T-34 had other distinctions. In 1942, American experts conducted full technical tests and analyses of a T-34 given by Stalin, and concluded: "The distinguishing characteristics of the T-34 were: a low, flowing silhouette, simplicity of design, low specific pressure on the ground. The angles of the armor create brilliant possibilities for its protection."¹² The experts thought and continue to think that the shape of the T-34's body was ideal. The T-34 also had a powerful diesel engine, specifically designed for it. In the armies of other countries, such engines did not exist either at the beginning of the war or at the end. Just for that engine alone the T-34 could be considered the best tank in the world.

If the T-34 had neither a powerful gun, nor an ideal body shape, nor a diesel engine, it still could be considered the best tank in the world because of its wide caterpillar tracks, which allowed it to act on any terrain and in any weather. The T-34 surpassed any German tank in all parameters: speed, acceleration ability, cross-country ability, especially when moving on sand, mud, and snow.

The T-34 was famous, because all its innovations were incorporated into one design, and it achieved a harmonic combination of all its remarkable qualities. On top of everything, the T-34, unlike other tanks, was good for mass production. Any large-scale automobile factory could be converted to produce this tank. The production of the T-34 did not demand a highly qualified workforce. It was easy to use and repair. The T-34 had almost inexhaustible reserves for improvement. Its weight could be significantly increased without lowering the quality of its movement characteristics.

The T-34 served not only as a model for many imitations, but was also the prototype for many generations of new tank models. Not a single tank of World War II left behind it a row of descendants. The only exceptions were the T-34 and the KV. The KV was constantly improved upon and became the IS-1, then underwent a long evolution and turned into the IS-4 and the T-10. The lineage of the T-34 continues today, and direct descendants of the T-34 are among the most numerous units in the world.

In June 1941, the Red Army suffered a crushing defeat, which had to be explained. Communist historians acknowledged the remarkable qualities of the T-34, but added that these tanks were very few in number; there were only 967 of them. Many educated and honest historians repeated that on June 21, 1941, Stalin only had 967 T-34s. Even if this had been true, the word “only” was disputable—the rest of the world had none. In the five western border military districts, which constituted the first strategic echelon of the Red Army, there really were 967 T-34 tanks. But the forces of the second strategic echelon were being secretly transferred to the western regions of the country. They also had T-34 tanks. In total, the Red Army had 1,225 of them on May 31, 1941. By June 21, the factories shipped out and unloaded another 138 T-34s. On top of this, another 37 T-34s were produced, tested, but not yet shipped. Overall, at the time of the invasion, the Soviet Union had exactly 1,400 T-34s.¹³

However, even this was not all. The T-34 was produced in series. Meanwhile, the attempts to create an equal or superior tank in Germany began only on November 25, 1941. In June, July, August, September, and October 1941, Germany had not yet begun attempts to create an analogous tank, while the Soviet factories continued producing the T-34. During the second half of 1941, Soviet industry put out another 1,789 T-34s in addition to the 1,400 that existed on June 22. In 1942, the production of T-34s went at a rate of thirty-five a day. In 1942, 12,520 T-34 tanks were produced.¹⁴ Very few, I agree. But in Germany, the production of an analogous tank had not yet begun.

The German equal of the T-34 was the Panther, which first appeared in the summer of 1943 during the great tank battle at Kursk. The Panther was a magnificent tank. Some experts considered it the best tank of World War II, and claimed that the Panther surpassed the T-34 in all aspects. Oddly enough, after the war, practically all designers in the world copied the best aspects of the T-34, while nobody copied the Panther. This tank did not leave any descendants behind, and for a good reason. Let's look at those parameters according to which the Panther did not surpass the T-34.

First, the T-34 had a diesel engine, while the Panther had a carburetor one. A diesel engine was more economical and less susceptible to fire. Second, the Panther had a very irrational design. The designers copied many aspects of the T-34, but not the most important—the rational location of both the engine and the transmission, in the rear of the tank. As a result, the Panther weighed 44.8 tons, even though it was supposed to weigh 30 tons. The Panther

was considered a medium tank, but in weight it equaled the Soviet heavy tanks: the most massive version of the Panther weighed 45.5 tons, while the Soviet heavy tank IS-2 weighed 46 tons. In length, width, and height of the body, the Panther surpassed the Soviet heavy KV and IS tanks. This meant that it was easier to hit the Panther. If we have two safes of equal weights, but different sizes, the one that is larger in size has thinner walls. The same thing is true for tanks: larger sizes given equal weights always means weaker armor protection.

With its dimensions and weight, the Panther could not compete with the T-34 in anything related to mobility. The T-34 surpassed the Panther in maneuverability, acceleration, and cross-country mobility, that is, in all parameters needed for offence. No matter how ferocious a tank is in defense, a country cannot win a war through defense. I will reiterate that only mobility can bring victory. The T-34 was good for maneuver warfare, while the Panther was completely unfit for it. There was not a single successful offensive operation in history that was conducted with the participation of Tiger and Panther tanks. German General F. W. von Mellentin described the T-34 as “the best example of an offensive weapon of [World War II].” The heavy Panther could crush anybody in defense, but it could not compete with the T-34 on a raid of many kilometers deep into the enemy rear.

It is simple to create complicated things. It is very difficult to create simple things. The designers of the T-34 tank made it as simple as possible. Therefore, the T-34 was good for mass production. Before the war, tanks in the Soviet Union were produced in three main centers: Leningrad, Stalingrad, and Kharkov. Kharkov was lost during the course of the war. Leningrad was not lost, but the Kirov plant, which prior to the war built tanks, was only seven streetcar stops away from the front line. Leningrad was under siege, and had no metals, no energy, and therefore no mass production of tanks. Stalingrad was not lost, but the events of the war were not beneficial for mass tank production. After the three main centers stopped production, it was organized in new places, and during World War II there were more T-34 tanks produced alone than tanks of all types in Great Britain, Germany, and Japan put together.¹⁵

The Panther's main flaw was its complex design, which made the tank unfit for mass production. Only 5,976 tanks of this model were produced. Additionally, another 392 self-propelled guns based on the Panther were made.¹⁶ The Soviet Union produced nine T-34s for every Panther.¹⁷ For every self-propelled gun based on the Panther, the Soviet Union produced thirteen Su-85 and Su-100 self-propelled guns based on the T-34. Just of these two types, 5,139 self-propelled guns were produced.¹⁸

General Heinz Guderian loved the Panther with all his heart, but when Hitler ordered a halt in the production of all earlier models, so that only Panthers and Tigers would be produced, Guderian protested and managed to reverse the order. He was right: if only the most expensive and complex tanks were produced, there would be few of them. After the war Guderian wrote: “Such a path inevitably led to the defeat of Germany in the near future. The Russians would have won the war without help from the West, and occupied all of Europe. No force on earth could have stopped them. Europe's problems would have been simplified and we all would have learned what real ‘democracy’ means.”¹⁹

The Germans were unable to design a good tank for mass production. Therefore, until almost the very end of the war Germany had to produce obsolete models to supplement the Tigers and Panthers and compensate for the losses incurred in battle. The American tank expert Steven Zaloga went so far as to consider the production of Panthers a mistake: “The decision to enlist among weapons such a large, heavy, and complex tank as the Panther in the

category of medium tanks was one of the factors that limited the German tank production to a level much lower than the Soviet.”²⁰

The Panther and the T-34 should not even be compared. Comparing them is like comparing boxers from different weight classes. If Stalin didn't have any other tanks, then we would be forced to compare the T-34 with the Panther. But Stalin had the IS-2. The IS-2 was adopted in the same year as the Panther, and weighed the same. They should be compared. The Panther resembled the IS-2 tank in another aspect as well: the Panther was a complex, expensive tank for elite formations. The IS-2 was deployed in exactly the same way, to fight in heavy breakthrough tank units and nowhere else. With the same weight and roughly equal mobility characteristics, the IS-2 had a much more powerful armor and surpassed the Panther in fire power.²¹

In 1941, only two armies in the world recognized the necessity of heavy tanks. Obviously, they were the German and the Soviet armies. The order to begin project development of the first German heavy tank was given on May 26, 1941. The project was called MK4501: 45 tons, model one. The project resulted in the Tiger. Once again the German designers were unable to stick to the planned weight. The tank was supposed to be 45 tons, but came out at 57 tons. However, this happened later:: in 1941, obviously, there was no tank yet. By June 22, German designers had only made the first set of sketches. It was still a long time until the test models made of metal, but at least the attempt to create a heavy tank was made on paper.

In contrast, work on creating a heavy tank in the Soviet Union began in 1930. In 1933, the first Soviet heavy tank, the T-35, was produced in series and entered the ranks of the troops. It was a five-turret giant, weighed 45 tons, and was operated by a crew of eleven men. It was the only five-turret tank in the world that was used by troops. It had three guns and six machine guns. Its armor was 30 mm thick. In 1941, not a single German tank, and no other tank in the world, was equal to the Soviet medium T-28 tank. Obviously, none of them could even approximately compare with the heavy T-35. Design of the T-35 was continuously improved. For example, the models from 1938 increased the number of machine guns to seven, and the armor was made 50 mm. The last series of T-35 joined the troops in 1939. But the tank was improved even after the production was completed: after the war in Finland, all T-35s were returned to the factories and their armor was reinforced to 80 mm. The weight of the tanks reached 50 tons.

In 1939, government tests of three of the newest Soviet heavy tanks, the KV-1, SMK, and T-100, were conducted in combat conditions. These tanks were tested in “anti-tank” territory, in conditions in which the use of tanks was theoretically impossible. The Soviet heavy tanks withstood the extreme challenges of the war in Finland: the absence of roads, the obstacles hidden under piles of snow, the impenetrable forests, swamps, deadly fire, vast minefields, anti-tank ditches, steel hedgehogs, scarps and counterscarps, and cold temperatures that caused steel to crumble.

The bloody experiment in Finland proved that Soviet heavy tanks could fight successfully even in those conditions. Out of the three heavy experimental tanks, the KV-1 was recognized as the best. On December 19, 1939, the Red Army enlisted it among its weapons, and the industry received orders to produce it in series. In February 1940, the heavy KV-2 tank was tested in military conditions and also was accepted into the army.

The KV-1 and KV-2 weighed 47 and 52 tons, respectively. The KV was the first tank in the world with a true anti-shell armor: it had a frontal armor of 75 mm, which could be

further reinforced. The wide caterpillar tracks of the KV allowed it to fight on almost any terrain in any weather conditions. Imagine the situation of the following year, 1941: German tanks got stuck in the snow and the mud; the crews (and future historians) cursed the weather and lack of roads, while the KV advanced through the mud. Hitler lost the war, but the mud and the cold weather were not to blame—it was the German designers, who counted on easy victories and on operations only during the resort season and only in places that had good roads. They should have designed tanks for war, not for parades. They should have tested them in Finland. They should have given them wider caterpillar tracks. And they should have installed diesel engines. The KV had a 600-horsepower diesel engine. The Soviet tank's diesel engine surpassed all foreign tank engines in power, reliability, and economy. The use of a diesel engine drastically reduced the risk of catching fire. A 76-mm long-barrel F-32 gun was installed on the KV. At that time, this gun was unrivaled in the world. In comparison, Germany had great tanks, which conquered all of Europe, but the most powerful German tank gun at the beginning of World War II was the 75-mm short-barrel gun on the Pz-IV tank. The initial speed of the shells it fired was 385 m/s. This was a very good gun. But the KV-1 had an initial shell speed of 662 m/s. The difference in initial shell speed was a difference both in the energy of the shell and in the precision of firing.

The KV-2 had even more powerful weapons. It had the 152-mm howitzer. The most powerful German tank shell of that time weighed 6.8 kg. It was a very good shell for a very good weapon. But the KV-2 fired concrete-destroying shells that weighed 39.9 kg at an initial speed of 529 m/s, and high-explosive shells that weighed 48.7 kg. There were even reports of a shell that weighed 50.8 kg. The Chief of the General Staff of the German land army Colonel-General Franz Halder simply did not believe the report of a weapon of such caliber on a Soviet tank.²² At the same time two other heavy tanks, the SMK (55 tons) and the T-100 (58 tons), also passed government tests. If the choice had fallen on any of them they could have been launched into production. Aside from these tanks, the KV-3 and the KV-220 were created and subjected to government tests. Prototypes of the KV-4 (90 tons) and the KV-5 were also designed but never produced because of Hitler's attack.

Germany and the USSR shared the two first places in heavy tank production. There was nobody in third place. Elsewhere around the world, generals and designers did not even think of drafting a heavy tank on paper. The situation was such that while Germany had a heavy tank just on paper, other countries did not have heavy tanks even on their minds, while the Soviet Union was the only country in the world that in 1941 had heavy tanks both in experimental stages and in series production. The Red Army was the only army in the world that had heavy tanks among its units.

Nonetheless, Western and Soviet historians claim that Germany was ready for war, and the Soviet Union was not. They pronounced the T-35 tank obsolete and didn't mention it in statistics, even though the rest of the world had nothing comparable to the T-35 tank. The T-35 surpassed everything other countries had in terms of weapons, armor, and engine power—all the main characteristics. Moreover, the T-35, despite its size and weight, exerted less pressure on the ground than the German tanks, which meant it had much greater mobility, did not sink in snow, mud, and soft ground, where twice- and three-times-lighter tanks of other armies sank. If the T-35 were declared obsolete, all other tanks around the world had to be declared obsolete as well, and excluded from statistics.

As for the KV, the same trick was used. It was described as a great tank, but there were “only” 508 of them. Once again, I will repeat that the rest of the world had none! Besides, 508 KVs were just in the first strategic echelon of the Red Army on May 31, 1941. On the same date, the second strategic echelon had an additional 128 KVs. By June 21, factories unloaded another 41 KVs. Yet another 34 KVs were produced, but not yet shipped.²³ Thus, on June 21, 1941, the Soviet Union had 711 KV tanks, and continued their production through all of 1942, while German designers drafted sketches, made prototypes, and assembled test models.

It is impossible even in theory to compare the KV-1 and KV-2 with the very best German tanks, the Pz-III and Pz-IV: the KV was a heavy tank, while the German army had no tank of this weight class in 1941. The leading German theoretician and practitioner of tank warfare Colonel General Heinz Guderian maintained that “warfare of tank against tank is similar to naval warfare. There, battle is also conducted only by the strongest.”²⁴ When the war began, Stalin put into use the KV-1 (47 tons) and the KV-2 (52 tons), as well as the “obsolete” T-35 (50 tons), while Hitler had nothing similar and was forced to use the best that he had—the obsolete medium Pz-III and Pz-IV tanks, which weighed 20 to 21 tons. I would not compare them at all if the German army had anything more noteworthy, but it did not. During the war, the KV fought against the best that was available in the German army—and the war drew its comparisons.

General of the Army K. N. Galitsky described the battle between one heavy KV and three medium German Pz-IIIIs: The KV fired two shots and two of the German tanks were destroyed, while the third German tank decided to leave, but its engine stalled while trying to drive across a ditch. The KV caught up with it and “smashed it with its weight, crushed it like a nut.”²⁵ General Galitsky described another incident: A damaged Soviet KV was found, surrounded by ten destroyed German tanks. The KV was hit by forty-three shells, out of which forty made dents, and only three went through the armor. While the German tanks were destroying one KV, it destroyed ten German tanks.

Colonel General A. I. Rodimtsev remembered: “During the course of eleven months of war, we did not know a single instance in which a German gun pierced the armor of this tank. It had happened that a KV tank had ninety to one hundred dents from enemy shells, but still continued to go into battle.”²⁶ Other Soviet generals had many similar examples. Perhaps Soviet generals were embellishing the situation? No. In German sources of that time there was a subdued panic: German tankers were used to their tanks being the best in the world, and suddenly they came against the KV. They were unprepared. German documents of the time are sufficiently known. I will not repeat them. The general conclusion for the year 1941 was: “The KV is the most frightening weapon that a soldier has ever had to encounter in battle. Anti-tank guns are powerless against it.”

The works of contemporary Western historians also confirm the invincibility of the KV. The British military historian R. Goralski described a battle between one KV and a group of German tanks and anti-tank guns: during just this one battle, the KV took seventy direct hits; all the shells left dents in the armor, but not one went through it.²⁷ American historian Steven Zaloga also provides similar examples. (I recommend his books to everyone for there is no better foreign expert on Soviet tanks.) He wrote of an incident when one KV destroyed eight German tanks, took thirty direct hits from a very close range, and not one shell pierced its armor.²⁸

The KV remained the most powerful tank in the world throughout the first half of World War II, right up to the Stalingrad battle. No other country in the world had anything comparable in the same weight class. The KV design had reserves for improvement, which enabled it to undergo several stages of development from the KV-1 to the KV-13. Later, it turned into the IS-1 and then the IS-2, the most powerful tank of World War II.

The evolution yielded stronger armor and increased gun power, and in 1943 the IS-2 was put into use. B. H. Liddell Hart wrote: "These monsters had six-inch [150-mm] armor and were armed with 122-mm guns, while the most powerful German Tiger had just an 88-mm gun and four-inch [100-mm] armor."²⁹ Steven Zaloga said: "In rare instances, a shell from the IS-2 tank did not pierce the armor of German tanks, but this did not change anything: the energy of the shell was so great that it tore the turret off any German tank."³⁰ Major General F. W. von Mellentin admitted: "[IS-2s] caused excessive problems for our Tigers."³¹

Designers of the Soviet heavy tank accomplished a technological feat: they almost doubled the thickness of the armor and installed a gun that was three times more powerful, while staying in the same weight class and even reducing the weight of the heavy tank. The KV-1 weighed 47.5 tons, while the IS-2, its direct and several times more powerful descendant, weighed 46 tons.

Stalin had a remarkable pair: the most powerful heavy tank, in terms of fire power and armor, for elite units, and a wonderful, mass-produced, truly medium T-34 for regular units. Stalin understood that the T-34 needed to be improved, but it couldn't be allowed to turn into a heavy, complex, expensive tank for the elite. In that case, the T-34 would stop being a mass-produced tank, and the war would be lost. Soviet designers succeeded in improving the characteristics of the T-34 during the war, but in weight and in simplicity of production and maintenance they kept it in the medium tank class, which could easily be put out by the tens of thousands.

Soviet medium and heavy tanks were an inseparable pair, like two complementary weapon systems. The availability of tens of thousands of relatively inexpensive and simple T-34s allowed them to be used anywhere, thereby conserving the energy of the heavy tanks for secondary objectives. The crews of the T-34s could confidently fight, knowing that they had the support of an almighty KV or IS behind them. The availability of the heavy tank increased the battle capabilities of the medium tanks.

10

On the “Obsolete” Soviet Tanks

If I had known that the Russians really possessed such a number of tanks . . . I think I would not have started this war.

—ADOLF HITLER, AUGUST 4, 1941

When Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, the German armed forces had zero tanks, while the Red Army had 4,000 tanks. In the whole of 1933, not a single tank was produced in Germany; in contrast, 3,819 tanks of all types and modifications were produced in the Soviet Union.¹ The production of tanks in Germany began in 1934: in the next five years, German factories produced 2,683 tanks.² Soviet factories in the same time period produced 14,283 tanks.³ On January 1, 1939, the Red Army was equipped with 21,100 battle-ready tanks.⁴ In 1939, Hitler started World War II with 3,195 tanks, the same number that Soviet factories produced per year in peacetime.

In 1941, the German army, by a crushing blow, defeated gigantic gatherings of Soviet troops in the border regions. Thousands of Soviet tanks were destroyed or simply abandoned by the troops. This catastrophe had to be explained somehow. Communist historians explained what happened very simply: the tanks were obsolete, and therefore useless. The whole world laughed at Stalin and at his “obsolete” tanks. But how many of them were there? To this question, an equally simple answer was prepared: why count them if they were obsolete? For the six decades since the disaster of 1941, the number of Soviet tanks has never officially been named. Only after the dismantling of the Soviet Union has the truth slowly started to emerge.

What were these “obsolete” tanks? A few thousand of them had the “BT” marker. Their spiritual father was the great American tank genius George Walter Christie. Soviet commanders and designers were the only ones to see the value of Christie’s achievements. Two of Christie’s tanks were purchased and shipped to the Soviet Union with fake documents, in which they were listed as agricultural tractors. On December 24, 1930, a ship carrying the “tractors” of Christie’s design left New York.

In the Soviet Union, all aspects of Christie's "tractors" were carefully studied. An entire family of tanks was created based on their design—the BT-2, BT-5, BT-7, BT-7A, and BT-7M. BT stood for *bystrokhodnyi* (high-speed) tank. The shape of the BT was simple and rational. Not a single tank in the world during the prewar period and the early period of World War II had an armor of such a shape. The best tank of World War II, the T-34, was a direct descendant of the BT. The shape of its body was a development of the idea of the great American designer. After the T-34, the principle of a sloped location of the frontal armor sheets was used on the German Panther, and later on tanks around the world.

In the 1930s, practically all tanks around the world were produced according to one design: the engine in the rear, the transmission in the front part. The BT was an exception: its engine and transmission were both in the rear. Twenty-five years later, the entire world understood the advantages of the BT design. The BT tanks were heavily armed for their time. The 45-mm cannon could penetrate the armor of any foreign tank. Great Britain and the United States began installing such cannons on their tanks only a decade later, in 1942 and 1943. In addition to thousands of BT tanks, armed with 45-mm cannons, 154 BT-7As were manufactured and armed with 76-mm KT-26 cannons.⁵ At the beginning of World War II, no tank in the world outside the borders of the Soviet Union had weaponry of comparable caliber.

What about the armor? The BT had just bullet-proof armor. At that time, most of the world had tanks with the same kind of bullet-proof armor. The engine is the heart of the tank. The BT-2, which was made operational in the Red Army in 1932, had a 400-horsepower M-5 engine. German tanks began having engines of equal power only by the end of 1942. The specific power of the BT was 36.4 horsepower per ton of mass.⁶ Not a single tank in the world had such a high specific power, which allowed the tank to do unbelievable things: "BT units could jump over obstacles to a distance of 15 to 20 meters; a few could do it to a distance of 40 meters."⁷ The cinematography of those times preserved such incredible stunts of Soviet tank drivers for posterity. Nonetheless, Soviet historians categorized these tanks among the obsolete models, calling them so obsolete that until 1991 they were not included in statistics.

In April 1941, Germany began producing in series the T-IIIJ tank. In the German army it had the highest specific power—13.9 horsepower per ton of mass. How could the BT-2 be obsolete, if its specific power was almost three times higher than that of the best German tank? The first BTs had a speed of 69 mph, that is, over 110 km/h.⁸ Seventy years later any tanker would still be envious of such high speed. Soviet sources point to the much lower figures of 86 km/h for BT-7Ms, and 72 km/h for BT-2s and BT-5s, as maximum speeds for BT tanks on paved roads.⁹ This discrepancy, between Soviet and foreign sources, is simply explained: on Soviet roads, the engine was too powerful for the transmission, so a speed-limiting device had to be installed. When the tank was used on highways, the device could easily be taken away. But even if we think of the BT speed as being "only" 86 or even just 72 km/h, at that time no other tanks in the world had such statistics.

The BT tanks were constantly improved. In 1936, after a series of experiments, a number of BT crews became capable of crossing rivers underwater. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, still not all the tanks of the most developed countries have such capabilities. In 1939 the Red Army received the BT-7M. It had the following capacities: on tracks over

unpaved roads it could run for 520 km; on tracks over paved roads—630 km; on wheels over paved roads—1,250 km.¹⁰ Sixty years later, this is still the dream of any tanker. The BT-7M had a 500-horsepower engine. At that time, the most powerful foreign tank engines were: the 300-horsepower German Meibach HL 120TRM, the 307-horsepower French Renault for the Renault B1bis tank-horsepower.

The “obsolete” BT-7M had an extremely powerful engine—a legendary high-speed B-2 tank diesel. No other country was able to create such an engine before the end of the war; all of Stalin’s enemies and allies had to get by with carburetor engines, which made their tanks extremely vulnerable to fires. In some countries, some tank models were equipped with diesel engines, but these were weak automobile engines. The rest of the world learned to use powerful diesel engines, specifically designed for tanks, only after the war, about ten to twenty years after it was done on the BT-7M.

Having said so many positive things about the quantity and quality of Soviet BT tanks, we must be just and note one small disadvantage: these tanks could not be effectively used on Soviet territory.

The main advantage of the BT tank was its speed. This quality dominated all its other qualities to such an extent that it even had a bearing on the tank’s name—high-speed tank. The BT tank was a weapon of aggression. All of its characteristics make the BT resemble a small, but extremely mobile, horseback warrior from the undefeatable hordes of Genghis Khan. That great world conqueror vanquished all his enemies through a sudden attack of colossal masses of extremely mobile warriors. He destroyed his enemies mainly not by powerful weapons, but through decisive maneuvers. He did not need heavy, clumsy knights, only light, quick, mobile troops, capable of traversing vast territories, crossing rivers, and going deep into the enemy’s rear. The BT tanks were exactly the same. At the beginning of World War II, the Red Army had 6,456 BT tanks—that’s as many as all operational tanks of all types in the rest of the world.¹¹ Soviet commanders clearly understood that BT tanks were not good for conventional warfare, but they were great in situations when the Red Army suddenly broke into enemy territory. “High speed tanks [by] their nature are a weapon of sudden attack. Their full effect (and success in general) can be obtained only if their use is sudden.”¹² In other words, if we suddenly attack the enemy, we will have success, but if the element of surprise is not on our side, we will not.

The BT tanks could only be used in aggressive warfare, only in the enemy’s rear, and only in a decisive aggressive operation, when hordes of tanks suddenly broke through onto enemy territory and bypassed points of opposition, thrusting deep behind enemy lines, where there were no enemy troops, but where all cities, bridges, factories, airports, ports, storage facilities, command posts, and communication units were located.¹³

The amazing aggressive characteristics of the BT were achieved by using a unique landing gear. On field roads, the BT moved using caterpillar tracks, but when it found itself on good roads, it shed the heavy tracks and sped forward on wheels like a racecar. It is well known that speed and cross-country ability are a trade-off: either we have a racecar that only rides on good roads, or a slow tractor that can ride anywhere. The Soviet marshals chose in favor of the racecar, so the BT tanks were not good for the bad roads of Soviet territory. In the battles fought on Soviet territory, thousands of BT tanks were abandoned. Off the roads, even with the caterpillar tracks they were difficult to use. The great potential of the BT tanks was never realized, because it was impossible to realize it on Soviet territory. To the question

of what was most important for the BT tanks, its wheels or its caterpillar tracks, Soviet textbooks give a clear answer—the wheels. The BT's most important characteristic, its speed, was achieved through use of its wheels.

Seventy years ago, there were no highways on Soviet territory. And in 1939, not a single immediate Soviet neighbor had an autobahn either. But in the following year, through the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Stalin divided Poland and established common borders with a nation that had autobahns. This nation was Germany.

They say that Stalin's tanks were not ready for war. This is not true. They were not ready for a defensive war on their own territory. They simply were prepared to fight on different territories.

Here is another family of Soviet tanks: T-37A, T-38, and T-40. The T-37A was received by the Red Army on August 11, 1933. It weighed 3.2 tons, its crew consisted of two men, and it had bullet-proof armor. It was armed with one DT machine gun, had a 40-horsepower engine and a maximum speed of 36 to 40 km/h on paved roads and 6 km/h in the water. The T-37A was a light tank—but light does not mean bad and obsolete. The T-37A was the first amphibious tank in the world to be regularly used by troops.¹⁴ Even if the T-37A really was a bad tank, its inclusion in the armed forces still meant a technological breakthrough of historical importance, because there was nothing comparable or close in the armies of other countries at the time. The Japanese actively pursued amphibious tank warfare in the 1920s and 1930s. They even tested a few prototype models. But not one of the models was mass-produced as a part of the Japanese armed forces before 1941.

The German Pz-I was accepted by the army a year later—in 1934. It had almost the same weight—3.5 tons, the same crew—two men, the same bulletproof armor, and the same caliber machine gun. Only it could not float. When the high-minded scholars laugh at the T-37A that could float, I offer to compare the characteristics of the oldest, lightest Soviet amphibious tank with the characteristics of the best, most powerful German amphibious tank. Here, the laughter stops. It turns out that Germany does not have and never had amphibious tanks. Before the war it had none, and during the war none appeared. The great Germany entered the twenty-first century without amphibious tanks. It is unknown when it will begin producing them. Stalin on the other hand had amphibious tanks in the early '30s. In this field Stalin was many decades ahead of Hitler.

France did not have amphibious tanks at that time. Britain also had none before or during the war. The birthday of American tank forces is July 10, 1940. When the *Wehrmacht Heer* crushed with its tanks Poland, Belgium, Holland, France, and the British army on the continent, the Red Army tanks were crushing the Japanese Sixth Army at Khalkhin-Gol and were "liberating" Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Bessarabia, and Bukovina. America at that time had no tank troops at all. After the defeat of French and British troops on the continent, American generals realized that it was time to get off horses and to think of creating tank troops. A year later, in June 1941, the United States had less than four hundred tanks.¹⁵ These were weak, old-fashioned machines, very tall, with very light armor and a multi-tiered distribution of completely obsolete weapons. The most powerful tank weapon of American tanks in 1941 was the 37-mm cannon. Even this was mounted only on some tanks. The majority of American tanks had only machine guns. America had no amphibious tanks at the time. By the end of the war, in 1944, the United States had developed amphibious armored personnel carriers of huge dimensions, and some of them had the turrets of light tanks. These

were reliable machines, they had great floating capability. But nonetheless, these were not tanks, and nobody tried to call them such. So, the difference we have is: in America, something resembling an amphibious tank appeared by the end of the war, while in the Soviet Union, amphibious tanks were enlisted in the armed forces long before the war's beginning.

So, what was the nature of the "light and obsolete" T-37A? Here is some information about it. In August 1935 upon orders from Voroshilov, the Commissar of Defense of the USSR, seven T-37As started out from Leningrad, traversed several tens of kilometers on caterpillar tracks, then sailed along the river Luga, through impenetrable weeds, then on to the river Shelon and Lake Ilmen. There was a storm on the lake. The distance across the lake was 55 kilometers. The tanks crossed this distance in 8 hours and 15 minutes. Then they came to the river Volkhov, the Novoladozhsky Canal, and the ferocious, treacherous river Neva. All seven tanks reached the finish line by the Petropavlov fortress. In eleven days they had crossed seven hundred kilometers, six hundred of them by sailing—all this without a single accident or even a breakdown.

Of course, not every single T-37A and not every tank driver was capable of setting such a record. Nonetheless, this is a record that since 1935 has not been successfully repeated by anybody. Nobody has even come close to reproducing it. Until 1941, the position of the rest of the world regarding the creation of amphibious tanks had barely changed. In 1941, no country in Europe and America (other than the Soviet Union) had amphibious tanks as part of its national armament. That year, only in Japan did the emperor's fleet begin implementing the floating Gami tank for amphibious assaults; the Gachi and Togu floating tanks were introduced later on.¹⁶

The Soviet T-37A was produced from 1933 until 1936. A tank, if there is no war, can serve for ten, fifteen, even twenty years. In theory, the T-37A tanks that were produced in 1933 were scheduled to be replaced between 1943 and 1948, perhaps even later. The last tanks, produced in 1936, did not have to be replaced until 1951 to 1955. How could they be too old in 1941? And how did it happen that unique tanks, which by 1941 had only served five to eight years, were completely obliterated from the historical record?

What are they needed for? What use comes from amphibious tanks? If we are defending our own territory, if we are conducting strictly defensive warfare, amphibious tanks are not really needed. We can get by without them. In order to stop the enemy, one wants to have tanks with heavy armor and powerful weapons—the heavier and more powerful, the better.

If we cannot stop the enemy in defensive warfare, we are forced to retreat. We retreat using our own bridges. When threatened with a takeover, we can detonate our bridges and send them up into the sky. There is little use for tanks with light armor and machine guns in a defensive war. Their ability to float also remains completely unused: there is nowhere to sail to in defensive war.

But if we are conducting a crusade for world domination, then in order to herd the population of the planet into concentration camps, labor armies, and barracks, we have different needs. In order to break through the enemy's front, we need heavy tanks, more armor, and more powerful cannon. If a battle occurs, if two waves of tanks collide, once again, we need the most powerful tanks. Once the front line is broken and the enemy's tank waves are deflected and crushed, our task becomes to take advantage of the moment and complete a thrust deep into the enemy's rear, in order to split up his defenses, to have access to his communications and supply lines, to reach the aortas in order to cut them, to cut the enemy

off from his supply bases, to reach his capital, his industrial regions, his sources of oil, and his ports. A heavy tank is not very good for such a thrust. Due to its weight, it breaks roads and bridges and gets in the way of all those who are following. A heavy tank consumes a lot of fuel—try to provide fuel to several thousand tanks and artillery tow trucks and tens of thousands of automobiles, which are pushing forward deep into enemy territory. Aside from all this, a heavy tank is also slow and not very agile. It slows down the movement of your columns. Moreover, it quickly wears out and chokes, like a heavyweight in a marathon. For a forward thrust, medium and light tanks are ideal. They have less armor, weaker weapons, but they have much higher speed, maneuverability, and cross-country ability, and they are more economical with their fuel.

Now our armored armada is standing before a water obstacle. Here all heavy and medium tanks, and those light ones that have not been taught how to float, lose all their aggressive options. Their value is zero. They need a bridge. But the enemy protects the bridges, and blows them up when threatened with a takeover. Bridges have to be fought for. And it is better to fight for them not from our side, but from the side of the enemy, from where they are not anticipating it. In this situation, the value of light amphibious tanks grows tremendously. If two, three, five, ten such tanks sail across the river during the night in the direction of the bridge, and with a sudden attack from the rear seize the bridge, this can decide the fate of an entire operation, or even an entire war. Now you can send to the enemy shores, across the newly seized bridge, your heavy and medium tanks, along with artillery, infantry, staff, hospitals, thousands of tons of ammunition, fuel, and spare parts. You can use the seized bridge to send in reserves, and to send the wounded, prisoners, and trophies to the rear, to send damaged machinery back for repair.

If it is impossible to seize the bridge, the amphibious tanks become truly priceless. If there are no enemy bridges, we need to establish our own temporary bridges and means of sending goods across the river. For this we need to establish a bridgehead on the other side. The infantry is sent into battle. On logs, wooden planks, and inflatable rafts, they swim to the other shore. Meanwhile they are being fired upon by machine guns, mortars, and automatic rifles. Here, among the swimming men, imagine having ten or twenty light tanks. Their armor is not harmed by bullets and shell fragments, while their machine guns are capable of firing when none of the swimming men can.

Now we have reached the other shore. The most important thing is to catch hold of something, to dig our forces into the ground during the next twenty minutes or so, so that no counterattacks can hinder us. Then the mortars and machine guns are not so destructive, and the enemy gunners and snipers are not quite so deadly. Our wet, wounded, and exhausted infantry does not carry heavy weapons or ammunition. So, in these very first, most frightening minutes on enemy shores, the presence, help, and support of even one of the lightest tanks with just one machine gun is far more valuable and important than ten more powerful heavy tanks that would be forced to remain on our side of the river.

The number of Soviet amphibious tanks was kept secret for half a century. Later, it slowly began to become clearer. So, how many of them were there? The answer is: there were 2,627 T-37A tanks produced.¹⁷ In local conflicts the T-37A was rarely used, and they were rarely sent abroad. So in 1941, they were almost all fully functioning. In 1936, production of a perfected T-38 amphibious tank began. This tank continued to be produced in series until 1939. Overall, 1,375 tanks of this type were produced.¹⁸ The Kremlin historians called this

tank obsolete as well. But we will ask the same question: how could a tank be obsolete, if there were no analogous tanks in the world, and its age was only between two and five years?

December 19, 1939, is the brightest and the most remarkable day in the history of world tank design. On this day the Red Army received and enlisted an entire spectrum of new armor-tank weaponry—the three newest tanks: the light amphibious T-40, the medium T-34, and the heavy breakthrough KV tank. The T-34 is the best tank of all time. The KV was the most powerful tank in the world during the first half of World War II, right up until the Battle of Stalingrad. But the T-40 was no worse than these. In its class, it was also the best in the world and also had no equal.

It is interesting that the Kremlin historians remember the T-34 and the KV, but forget about the T-40. Meanwhile, the T-40 had a new, never-before-seen body shape, weighed 5.5 tons, and was armed with two machine guns: the large-caliber DShK and the regular DT. A variant of this model, the T-40S, was armed with 20-mm automatic cannon instead of the DShK. By June 21, 1941, a total of 277 T-40 tanks were built.¹⁹

By June 22, 1941, Hitler had on the eastern front 180 tanks in the under-six-ton category.²⁰ Not one of them was amphibious and not one of them could compete with the Soviet light tanks. Stalin, on the other hand, had more than 4,000 tanks in this weight category. All of them were amphibious. Among them were 277 T-40s, which not only were amphibious, but also were capable of using their large-caliber DShK machine guns (and of course the 20-mm cannons) to pierce the armor of the German Pz-I tanks. Moreover, German Pz-I production was stopped in 1938, and these tanks not only were obsolete but also heavily worn-out, while the T-40 tanks were still in production, the paint not yet dried on many of them.

Foreign experts, those who understand even a little bit about tanks, talk of the T-40 with sighs of high regard. The vast majority of the T-40s were less than a year old. Some had left the factory doors on June 21, and some were still in the factory courtyard. When did they have time to become obsolete? When did they have time to become worn out? On June 22, 1941, on the eastern front, Hitler had 3,350 tanks in total of all types, all of them obsolete and among all of them not a single amphibious one, while Stalin's amphibious tanks alone numbered over 4,000.

By overcoming stormy Lake Ilmen, even the oldest of Soviet amphibious tanks proved the possibility of crossing the English Channel. But these tanks were designed for action on lakes and rivers. For crossing the English Channel, Stalin had other designs in the works for the future—the amphibious tank PT-1 and its variants. It weighed 14 tons, had a 500-horsepower engine, a speed of 6 km/h in the water and could reach 62 km/h on land, and 90 km/h when it shed its caterpillar tracks.²¹ This was a hybrid of a highway and an amphibious tank, a cross between a reconnaissance and a lightning battle tank. It was armed with a 45-mm cannon and four machine guns. It had a crew of four men. The PT-1 had a large body and impeccable floatability. This tank was designed and tested, but was not launched into series, for now sailing across the channels was not in the plans. When it would become needed, it could be launched into series.

The fate of Soviet amphibious tanks is a sad one: they were of no use in defensive war. Where would they sail? Upon orders from the People's Commissar for Defense, Marshal of the Soviet Union Timoshenko, and the chief of the general staff, General of the Army Zhukov, tens of thousands of tons of spare parts for the tanks, hundreds of thousands of tons of ammunition and fuel, were brought out to the very borders of the country. In the first

hours of the war, all this fell under fire or in the hands of the enemy. Soviet tanks were left without fuel, ammunition, or spare parts. Four thousand light amphibious tanks demanded a large amount of fuel and had little use in defensive war. Therefore, commanders easily parted with them: they ordered what was left of the fuel to be pumped into the medium and heavy tanks. The light ones were blown up, burned, broken, sunk, or just abandoned.

The best (and only) in the world, Soviet amphibious tanks in 1941 became unnecessary and played no role in the war. But why does nobody ask the question: why then were they developed and built? What were they prepared for? Why did Stalin need four thousand amphibious tanks, which he could not use in defensive war? Where was comrade Stalin planning to sail?

Winged Genghis Khan

Logic hinted that we should not wait for the enemy to bring all his aviation into action, but instead we should ourselves take initiative in the air and be the first to carry our massive strikes against his air bases.

—CHIEF MARSHAL OF AVIATION A. NOVIKOV,
IN *VOENNO-ISTORICHESKY ZHURNAL*

“**S**talin” is not a real name. It is the most famous of many pseudonyms of a man who for thirty years led the most criminal and most bloody empire in human history. But it is not his only pseudonym. Like every big criminal, Stalin had several different names and nicknames: “Vasiliev,” “Chizhikov,” “Besoshvili” (“son of the devil”), “Ivanovich,” and others. His closest comrades had the right to use the nickname “Koba” in their tight circle. Under this name Stalin was known long before he came to power, when he was a simple bank robber.

In extraordinary cases, Stalin used yet another secret pseudonym: “Ivanov.” Sometimes a minister, ambassador, general, admiral, or marshal received a cable, which began simply and harshly: “Comrade Ivanov ordered . . .” The highest-ranking leaders of the Soviet Union knew that this order must be obeyed at any cost, quickly, precisely, and within the indicated deadline. There was only one price to pay for an imprecise or untimely fulfillment of “Comrade Ivanov’s” orders—one’s life. In turn, every high-ranking official—a minister, ambassador, marshal, or other—could at any moment write a letter or telegram and send it simply to the address: “Moscow. Ivanov.” Bypassing all steps, the letter or telegram with such an address without any delays was laid directly on Stalin’s desk.

And one more fact which seems at first glance to have no ties to anything said above. In the summer of 1941, the Red Army suddenly employed completely unusual weapons: the multiple-launcher rocket weapons BM-8 and BM-13. They entered history under the name “Stalin’s Pipe Organs” or “Katyusha.” On August 6, 1941, the Red Army was equipped with a multiple-launcher rocket artillery system, the BM-8-36, and in the summer of the subsequent year, 1942, the BM-8-48.¹ A salvo from one BM-13 was sixteen rocket-propelled

rounds of 132-mm caliber. A salvo from the BM-8 was thirty-six rocket-propelled rounds of 82-mm caliber (forty-eight rounds starting in 1942). One battery consisted of four to six BM-8s or BM-13s. Usually one target was fired upon not by one battery, but by a group of batteries or even regiments. The advantage lay in the fact that hundreds or even thousands of missiles covered a huge territory almost simultaneously. Fire from a group of batteries was an avalanche of fire, accompanied by wild roar and noise. Many German soldiers, officers, and generals remember that this was a terrible weapon. General Field Marshal Albrecht von Kesselring: "The terrible psychological effect of 'Stalin's Pipe Organs' is a highly unpleasant memory for any German soldier who was on the Eastern front."²

The statistics are as follows: on June 1, 1941, the Red Army had seven BM-13 rocket launcher vehicles. One month later, there were seventeen such vehicles. Some were destroyed in battle, but others were produced, and by September 1 there were forty-nine of them. Production of the BM-8 began at the same time. By October 1, 1941, the Red Army, despite its losses, had 406 BM-8s and BM-13s. Later on, the count would mount into the thousands, and soon this weapon became a mass weapon. Despite losses of industrial and raw material bases, the Soviet Union managed to quickly supply its army with a principally new system of weapons.

In 1940 the Red Army's Air Force received into their inventory the newest airplane, the "Ivanov" Su-2. It was created by a group of designers headed by Pavel Osipovich Sukhoy, one of the greatest aviation designers of the twentieth century. Stalin personally issued the order to design the Ivanov. In the history of Soviet aviation, there was only one airplane that was designed under Stalin's secret pseudonym; moreover, the name of the project was not the initiative of devoted low-ranking officials, but given directly by Stalin himself. Aviation designer V. Shavrov testifies: "The codename 'Ivanov' was given according to Stalin's order. It was his telegraph address."³ There was no airplane yet, the designers had not even picked up their pencils, but Stalin had already given his name to the plane. The eventual production was planned for about 100,000 to 150,000 planes of this type.

The Su-2 had many uses: it could be a light bomber, a tactical reconnaissance plane, and an attack plane. Its design was extremely simple and rational. The Su-2 was better suited for mass production than any other airplane in the world. It possessed great firepower. Under its wings it could carry up to ten rocket-propelled shells of 82-mm or 132-mm caliber. These were eventually installed at the end of 1941 on some of the aircraft; they were the same missiles that were fired by "Stalin's Pipe Organs," the BM-8 and BM-13. The rocket-propelled shells were a ferocious weapon, especially if used suddenly and simultaneously by groups of ten planes from an extremely low altitude. Groups of Su-2 planes were to become "flying batteries." Aside from rocket missiles, the Ivanov Su-2 carried 400 to 600 kilograms of bombs, and five ShKAS machine guns (on the later Su-2 modifications), which at that time held the record in firing rate.

This was a magnificent airplane. The Su-2 had dual controls—one for the pilot and one for the gunner-navigator sitting behind him. Therefore, there was no need to put out a training version of the model: every battle-ready Su-2 could be used for training, and every plane used for training could also be used in battle. This simplified the mass preparation of pilots. The Su-2 could be managed by a pilot of any qualification.

Lieutenant General Anatoly Pushkin (in 1941 he was a major, commander of the 52nd Air Regiment) remembers: "The Su-2 was also great because it did not need airbases. It could take off and land on any even field."

Marshal Ivan Pstygo: “The Su-2 made a strong impression—it was a bomber, but looked like a fighter—small, compact, beautiful.”

On top of it all, the Su-2 had remarkable resiliency. Hero of the Soviet Union M. Lashin: “I flew the Su-2. It is a light plane, flies well, maneuverable, extremely durable. It took [a] long time for the Su-2 to burn. It never burst into flames like a torch.” Hero of the Soviet Union V. I. Strelchenko: “The Su-2 did not burn even when its fuel tank was damaged—the carbon dioxide defense helped.”

On June 22, 1941, the German army delivered a sudden crushing blow to the Red Army. This happened at the point of time when the Su-2s were just beginning to be delivered to the troops en masse. By June 22, 1941, about six hundred Su-2s were produced and delivered to eight air regiments located in the western border military districts. However, many aircraft were still parked at the plant airports and on their way to the places of deployment. On November 19, 1941, a decision was made to stop Su-2 production.⁴ An output of 100,000 to 150,000 was planned, but only about eleven hundred were produced. After the war, historians explained this by saying that the Su-2 was obsolete, so production was stopped. This explanation is surprising. How could it be that the outstanding designer Sukhoy created an airplane that became obsolete in the following year? How could a plane become obsolete if there is no other plane in the world that can compare to it in terms of firepower?

Airplane designer V. B. Shavrov wrote the fullest and the most objective history of the development of Soviet aviation. All other designers were his competitors, so Shavrov was not frugal in criticizing them. But he did not criticize the creators of the Su-2: “[I]ts creators cannot be reproached for anything; the plane corresponded to realistic demands that appeared only until the war [started].”⁵ In other words, everything was good, there was nothing to reproach the designers, before June 21, 1941, the Su-2 corresponded to demands, but at dawn on June 22 it no longer could satisfy those demands. How are we to understand this?

The tale of the Su-2 began five years before the German invasion. In the summer of 1936 Stalin gathered airplane designers at his dacha, greeted them with hospitality, and then gave them the task to construct an airplane under the codename “Ivanov.” Many groups simultaneously worked on Project Ivanov, including some under the command of Tupolev, Neman, Polikarpov, Grigorovich, as well as the design teams of Petlyakov, Sukhoy, Arkhangelsky, Myasishchev, Mikoyan and Gurevich, Lavochkin, and Grushin. In other words, almost all the Soviet airplane designers were concentrated on fulfilling this one single request. And do not think they cooperated. On the contrary: there was harsh competition—only the strongest would win, and all knew “Comrade Ivanov” had plenty of whips and rewards. The Su-2 was the one plane that Stalin placed his stakes on in the upcoming war, which he constantly described as necessary and unavoidable. What did the customer need in his order?

If Stalin had intended to avert World War II, he would have needed a strategic bomber in order to take away the potential aggressor’s desire to invade. But Stalin already had a strategic bomber. Remember, this was the same year, 1936, when Petlyakov finished working on the TB-7. If Stalin was intending to avert war, he had no need to gather designers and to put before them the task of creating a new airplane: he simply should have issued an order to start series production of the TB-7. But he did not do this. Stalin did not need an airplane to avert war. So, Stalin was not going to give an order to start producing such a plane in series. Or, actually, he issued such an order four times, and repealed it four times as well.

If Stalin was preparing for a truly defensive war to protect the Motherland, then he should have ordered his designers to create the best fighter in the world, capable of defending the skies over the Soviet Union. But this did not interest Stalin either. Nikolay Polikarpov was among those present at Stalin's dacha. He was a great designer of fighters: he had already created the I-15 and I-16 fighters. The I-15 was unequalled in its horizontal maneuverability. It was this aircraft that pilot Vladimir Kokkinaki used to set a world altitude record of 14,575 meters on November 21, 1935. And the I-16 opened a new page in the world development of aviation: it was the first mass-produced high-speed monoplane in the world. In 1936 Polikarpov was already working on even more powerful machines: he had the lead in the world race for the best fighter. Stalin should have left Polikarpov alone, not bothered him and not distracted him. Polikarpov knew how to make fighters; his pace should not have been interrupted. There was a race on, and every hour, every minute was worth its weight in blood. But no: Stalin ordered Polikarpov to drop all his work on creation of a fighter and start developing a light bomber, the Ivanov. Stalin was not very interested in fighter planes for a defensive war.

So, what was the ideal combat plane that Stalin had in mind, for the development of which he engaged all his best designers, all the creators of fighters as well as bombers? Stalin himself explained the demand thus: "*samolyot chistogo neba* [a clean sky aircraft]"—a light bomber designed to operate free of enemy resistance. From the creators of the Ivanov plane Stalin demanded neither record speed, nor record altitude, nor record range. Stalin was satisfied with the speed of 375 km/h near ground and 460 km/h up in the sky. Record-breaking characteristics were not required. Stalin demanded only simplicity, durability, and firepower. Stalin's plan was to create a plane that could be produced in numbers surpassing all warplanes of all types in all countries of the world combined.

The name of the plane, Ivanov, had one more significant feature. Ivanov was not only Stalin's secret nickname, but also the most common Russian name. "Stalin formulated the task in the following way: the plane must be very simple to produce, so that there could be as many planes as there are people in our country with the name Ivanov."⁶ So, Stalin planned to produce the largest series of planes in human history. But this was not a plane for defensive war. This was an aggressor airplane. Stalin planned, literally, to build as many light bombers as there were small but mobile horsemen in the hordes of Genghis Khan.

Pavel Osipovich Sukhoy fulfilled Stalin's demands to the highest level. He won the contest. Sukhoy's Ivanov was launched into production immediately, in two factories. Then it began to be produced at a third factory. Additionally, factories that produced other types of planes were ready upon orders to switch to making the Ivanov. In 1940, after the new indexing system was introduced, Sukhoy's Ivanov was named the Su-2 in honor of its creator.

A question arises: If on Stalin's orders 100,000 to 150,000 light bombers had been built, would not all the neighbors have been frightened? Stalin foresaw such a danger. Therefore, he did not plan the mass production of the Ivanov in peacetime. During the secret mobilization of 1940 through the first half of 1941, a small (in Soviet terms) series was produced—only several hundred of these planes. The objective of this series was to open the production line, gain experience, fly the planes, and test them in small conflicts. These first several hundred were meant to be used in the first strike, especially in secondary locations or combined with other aircraft that had higher speed. After the first sudden strike, it was planned to begin a mass production of the Ivanov, by the thousands. The Ivanov was

like an invisible mobilization reserve. It was the same as the situation with the PPSH submachine gun. The PPSH—the Shpagin submachine gun—was created before the war, tested, and approved. The war began and immediately every workshop, every plant that produced hardware, every small-scale factory began producing the most simple, reliable, very powerful weapon in inconceivable quantities. Stalin planned to proceed exactly the same way with the Ivanov airplane. Immediately after carrying out the first strike, Soviet aviation industry was to begin a mass production of the Su-2.

Here the question of defense arises. A relatively slow bomber, acting above the battlefield and adjacent enemy territory must be protected by fighters. If Stalin planned to simultaneously launch production of a corresponding number of fighters for cover, the light Su-2 bombers could have been used in any situation, for example for deflecting aggression. But there was no order for fighter planes in such quantities; therefore there was only one possible way to use the Ivanov Su-2 planes in war: to attack the enemy first and neutralize his aviation. Using large masses of such planes is impossible without crushing the enemy's air bases first. This is why Stalin's plan to produce a minimum of 100,000 light Su-2 bombers was equivalent to a decision to start the war with a sudden strike against the enemy's air bases.

In order to picture Stalin's plan, we must imagine ourselves on the shores of the Hawaiian Islands in December 1941. It is a bright sunny morning. The American fleet is in its harbor. Suddenly, the first wave of Japanese bombers, fighters, and torpedo-planes arrives. The first wave consists of 183 planes. Less than a quarter of these are fighters for cover. A powerful cover is not needed in the given situation. The calculations are based on the premise that American fighters will not have time to get off the ground and deflect the sudden strike. The Japanese air armada consisted mostly of attack planes—the bombers and torpedo-carriers Nakajima B-5N1 and B-5N2. There was nothing remarkable about the design and characteristics of the B-5N aircraft, but in a sudden attack it was awesome. In appearance, size, and flight characteristics, the Nakajima B-5N resembled a fighter more than a bomber. This gave it the ability to fly so low above its target that the faces of the pilots could be seen from the ground and the ships, so low that there were almost no misses when its lethal cargo was dropped. The Nakajima B-5N was a monoplane, with a low wing configuration and one radial two-row engine equipped with an air-cooling system. In some planes the crew consisted of three men: pilot, navigator, and gunner. But in most, it was only two: the planes were used in tight formations, like swarms of enraged bees, so there was no need for every plane to have a navigator. The bomb load of the plane was less than a ton, but each drop was made at point blank range. The B-5N had relatively weak defense weapons—one or two machine guns to defend the hind hemisphere. These planes did not need much defense weaponry. These were planes for sudden attack, “planes of clear sky,” a sky in which there are either very few enemy planes or none at all.

The light bomber Nakajima B-5N worked very well at Pearl Harbor, but its heroic days were over after that. The sudden attack was insufficient to take the American fleet and aviation out of the war for long. In consequent battles, when the Americans recovered, when regular war began without stabs in the back, the B-5N did not show any particular usefulness. Production of these planes continued for some time. Overall there were over 1,149 of them produced, and on that their history ended.⁷ The B-5N was created for a situation when nothing hampered its work in the sky. The B-5N was frightening to the weak and defenseless, frightening in groups, frightening during a sudden attack. It was frightening like a pack of

ferocious, bloodthirsty hyenas that do not have remarkable strength or speed, but have powerful fangs and act in groups against a victim weaker than they are, against him who does not anticipate attack and is not prepared to deflect it.

What does all this have to do with the Soviet plane Ivanov Su-2? The Ivanov was almost an exact copy of the Japanese air aggressor. In the summer of 1936, nobody could have predicted what would happen at Pearl Harbor five years later. In the summer of 1936, the Nakajima B-5N did not yet exist. There were only plans, which the Japanese did not announce. Therefore, it was impossible to suppose that Soviet designers were copying the Japanese. Copying demands time, and even if it had been possible to steal technological documentation (which would have meant mountains of papers), even then the translation (from Japanese!) would have taken several years. The Nakajima B-5N in Japan and the simultaneous varieties of the Ivanov plane in the USSR were created almost in parallel: the first flight of the B-5N was in January 1937, and the first flight of the Ivanov was on August 25 of the same year. Therefore, we are not talking of copying, but of two very similar yet independent processes of development.

On Stalin's orders, several variants of the Ivanov airplane were created. Each designer jealously guarded his secrets from his competitors, but every Soviet designer came up with the same winged hyena: a light bomber, bearing more resemblance to a fighter in appearance, size, and flight characteristics. Every Soviet designer chose the same scheme independently from his competitors: a monoplane with a low wing location, one radial engine in a dual row, with an air-cooling system. This is no miracle. It's just that all the designers were given one task: to create an instrument for doing the same job. Since the job was the same, the instruments created by different designers to perform it were also quite similar.

In the summer of 1936 the Nakajima B-5N had not yet flown once, and there was little information known about it. There was nothing record-breaking about the design of the new Japanese airplane, nothing that could have attracted Stalin's attention. But in 1936 Stalin was already thinking in the same terms as the Japanese admirals. In 1936, Stalin ordered his designers to create the same type of airplane that one beautiful morning would suddenly appear above the enemy, at a moment when the enemy does not anticipate an attack. This was the exact same scenario Stalin planned to use to enter World War II.

A relatively slow-speed plane can be a horrific weapon. Hitler subscribed to the exact same school of thought. He had his own winged jackal—the Ju-87. This was a single-motor plane, which bore more resemblance to a fighter than to a bomber. The crew of the plane was two people. Its defense weapons were weak: one machine gun to defend the rear hemisphere and two wing-mounted machine guns. The bomb load was less than one ton.⁸ It was of that generation of airplanes that did not pull up their gear during flight. It had a laughably slow speed. But groups of ten Ju-87 carried out sudden raids against sleeping air bases and with these raids they cleared the skies. After the first strike against the airbase, they flew above the enemy's territory in complete calm and did not need record speed, since there was nobody to chase them. The Ju-87 ruled above Poland, Norway, and France. In Britain it encountered resistance. It was impossible to crush the British air bases with a sudden attack—the conditions were not fit for carrying out surprise raids. After participating in several raids, the losses of Ju-87 were so high that an order was given to stop using them above the British Isles.

In the spring of 1941 came the Yugoslavia and Greece campaigns. The Ju-87 delivered a sudden strike and once again they were successful and loved. In May they carried out a

blow to Crete. Here they encountered British troops, but the strike was a surprise, so the Ju-87 once again became the symbol of Blitzkrieg, success, and victory. In June came a sudden attack on Soviet air bases. On a beautiful sunny morning, the German air force secured for itself a clear sky and could use airplanes of any model—there was nobody to be afraid of.

The Ju-87's rule lasted until the time when Soviet aviation gained strength. In the second half of the war, the Ju-87 was being used more and more rarely on the Soviet-German front, until it completely disappeared. "During the course of the eastern campaign, the loss of air superiority during a short time put in question the usefulness of using [the] relatively slow and not maneuverable dive-bombers Ju-87."⁹

The Ivanov was created later than the Ju-87. Therefore, the Ivanov's characteristics were higher, and in terms of designs the two planes had significant differences. But in spirit and general idea, in their assigned roles, the Ju-87 and Ivanov are twins. The plane Nakajima B-5N and the Ivanov are brothers, not just in idea and spirit, but in their main characteristics as well.

The planes for sudden attack did not need record-breaking characteristics. Stalin's logic is clear and simple: if a sudden attack can take care of the enemy's air bases and clear the sky of enemy planes, we will need a simple airplane with powerful weapons that can be mass produced; the most important of its designated uses is to give support to our advancing waves of tanks and paratroops, creating an air terror above defenseless territories. This was exactly the sort of airplane Stalin ordered from his designers.

The Su-2 had a tragic fate. In terms of firepower and speed it surpassed both the German Ju-87 and the Japanese Nakajima. But both the Ju-87 and the Nakajima B-5N got a chance to prove themselves in sudden attacks and gain fame. Hitler did not permit the Ivanov to do the work it was primarily designed to do. Hitler carried out a preemptive strike on Soviet air bases, so the Su-2 was left without the work for which it was created. The Su-2 was not needed in a defensive war. Some factories that were preparing the mass output of Su-2s (for example the Kharkov aviation factory) fell into enemy hands. Although some of the production equipment was evacuated, the production pace was lost. The Su-2s produced earlier suffered great casualties: they had little speed and could not escape the enemy when chased. They had weak defense weapons and could not fight off the fighters. Also, there were no Soviet fighters to give the Su-2 cover.

In a defensive war, fighters are needed first and foremost. Aviation designer S. A. Lavochkin urgently needed a powerful, reliable engine for the modernization of the LaGG-3 fighter, and he needed it in huge quantities. No problems arose—industry was prepared to produce the M-82 engine, which was meant for the Su-2 (as the replacement for the original M-8 and M-88B engines, which did not work as well as expected), in any quantity. Lavochkin installed it, and the renowned fighter La-5, beloved by pilots, was born.

Soviet industry was prepared for the mass production of ShKAS machine guns for many different types of airplanes, but before all for the Su-2. The Su-2 was only produced in limited numbers, but the preparedness of industry was not wasted. These machine guns were simply installed on other types of airplanes. Soviet industry was prepared for the mass production of bombs for the Su-2, and it did produce them. These bombs went to arming different types of airplanes as well. Soviet industry was ready to mass-produce 82-mm- and 132-mm-caliber rocket missiles, and it did produce them. They were used not only in aviation, but in ground artillery as well. In the blink of an eye, the Red Army had thousands of

“Stalin’s Pipe Organs.” The Communists called this an economic miracle, but there was no miracle. Simply during the period of secret mobilization Soviet industry was prepared to produce rocket missiles for the Su-2.

These weapons were much more effective when they armed the Su-2: artillerymen had first to receive information about their targets, while pilots could seek out the targets themselves; artillerymen sent their missiles several kilometers away, without seeing the target, while pilots flew hundreds of kilometers, saw their target and the results of their work; the next wave of airplanes always had the opportunity to finish the unfinished mission of the previous one.

Production of the Su-2 was stopped, but industry continued to produce rocket missiles by the millions. They were simply readjusted to be fired from ground installations and other types of airplanes. Production of 100,000 to 150,000 Su-2 planes was planned for conditions in which the Red Army would deliver the first attack, and nobody would hinder the industry’s work. Hitler ruined Stalin’s plan. But even after losing all the supplies of aluminum, and most of its aircraft and motor factories, the Soviet Union produced 38,729 airplanes, which were incomparably more complex in terms of production—the Il-2 and Il-10. Additionally, tens of thousands of planes of other types, all more complex than the Ivanov, were produced.

One more question: where did Stalin plan to find so many pilots to fly 100,000 to 150,000 Su-2 airplanes? This was not a problem. Stalin prepared an excess of pilots. True, they were trained to fly in clear skies. These pilots were not asked to have high-level pilot skills, to be able to fly at night, or to be able to navigate well in new places and situations. A huge number of Soviet pilots were trained for easy work: take off at dawn, fly in a powerful formation in a straight line, and reach the target. Pilots with this sort of qualification were not needed in defensive war, just like the Su-2 plane they were trained to fly. There were so many trained pilots that in 1942 many of them were given rifles and dropped by the thousands over Stalingrad, to reinforce the infantry.¹⁰

Hitler destroyed the plans of a Soviet invasion, but he did not even have a hint of Stalin’s true might, of the seriousness of his intentions, of how well Stalin was prepared to lead a war of aggression. In March 1939 at the Eighteenth Congress of the Communist Party, Stalin declared: “The aviation arms race in the capitalist countries [has continued] for a number of years and unquestionably presents one of the most characteristic and definitive signs of the inevitable general military conflict.” Stalin was right: in the late 1930s, there was a truly mad race in aviation technology. Military aviation forces in some of the largest Western nations reached two to three thousand aircraft and even crossed that threshold. Germany was far in the lead. The German air force reached four thousand warplanes. In March 1939, it was clear to Stalin that such a number of warplanes signaled the inevitability of a war—exactly as it happened. In that same year, 1939, Hitler began his war for global domination.

If we call three or four thousand warplanes by the term “wild arms race of aviation weapons,” then what do we call the preparations to produce the Su-2? If four thousand of Hitler’s warplanes of all types were enough testimony of the “inevitability of a general military conflict,” then what in that case does the preparation for producing 100,000 warplanes of just one type attest to?

12

About “Obsolete” Airplanes

Air force superiority is on the side of the enemy. The number of our units [that are] active on the front has been drastically reduced.

—CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF OF GERMAN GROUND FORCES,
COLONEL GENERAL FRANZ HALDER, JULY 17, 1941

From the moment that aviation came into being, the problem of acquiring air superiority—and, ideally, complete air domination—presented itself before military strategists. Without air superiority, victory is impossible. Air superiority can be attained through one of two ways: either destruction of the enemy’s air force on the ground, or through air battles. Usually both of these methods are used simultaneously. However, a commander of any rank unavoidably has to determine, based on the way the situation develops, which of these two methods is his priority at the given moment, and which is secondary. Before the war starts, the military and political high command of the country should clearly determine its position on the given question: which of these methods will be primary, especially in the early period of the war? If the primary method of attaining air superiority is to be the way of air battles, the attention of all designers should be turned to creating fighter aircraft. Designers of fighter aircraft should be given the best production facilities, the best aircraft engines, the most expensive equipment, and the rarest materials. If it is decided to win air superiority through air battles, the best pilots need to be sent to fighter aviation. These fighter pilots should be given the largest part of training resources and fuel, even if it is done at the expense of training other pilots. If, however, we have decided to win air superiority by destroying the enemy’s air force on the ground, then the attention of the designers should be turned to creating planes of an entirely different nature. Low-flying attack planes and light bombers are perfect for carrying out raids on air bases. The low-flying aircraft is not designed for air battle. This plane needs neither record speed, nor altitude, nor maneuverability. This plane has to meet entirely different requirements. It must be well defended from powerful fire from the ground, and must carry its own weapons powerful enough to destroy targets on the ground.

Both methods of attaining air superiority have their advantages and disadvantages. If we decide that the primary method of winning superiority in the air is to be through air battles, then we must be prepared for large losses of planes and pilots, and for prolonged, exhausting battles. The training of fighter pilots is a risky venture that requires a lot of time and huge expenditures. This method of winning superiority in the air has only one advantage: it is universal; it can be used in any situation. If we decide to win air superiority through destruction of the enemy's air force on the ground, the task can be accomplished quickly. During the course of one day or even just a few hours, we can secure not just superiority but total domination. All this can be accomplished with just one sudden, powerful raid, and no exhausting, prolonged air battles would need to follow. And we would not need to spend tremendous resources on training pilots. Even pilots of relatively low qualification are good for this job. They do not need to learn tricks. It is enough to teach them how to take off and land, to follow a route, and to shoot at stationary targets on the ground. This scenario has only one drawback: it can only be used against an enemy who is not awaiting an invasion.

Before and during the war, the Soviet Union designed quite a few remarkable and at the same time very simple airplanes. But the best achievement of the Soviet air force was not in designing airplanes that destroy enemy planes in the air, but in creating airplanes that destroy enemy planes and other targets on the ground. The Il-2 was the highest Soviet achievement in aviation technology during World War II. Air bases were its primary target. The Il-2 was a unique armored low-flying attack plane. We are not talking of armor sheets, which add a shield to a plane, but of a purely armored body up to 12 mm in thickness. The strength of this armor was reinforced by the fact that its details had a rounded shape. The problem of transparent parts was also solved. When bullets hit the front glass of the Il-2, they left only insignificant cracks, even when the fire came from extremely close ranges. The secret was the use of armored glass 63 mm thick.

The Il-2 was the only armored plane in history, a true flying tank. The crew cabin, engine, and fuel tanks were all covered with armor. Only the wings, the tail part of the fuselage, and the tail unit were left unshielded. Aside from the armor protection, a unique survivor rate, and remarkable body characteristics, the Il-2 had extremely powerful weapons: eight rocket missiles, two 23-mm automatic cannon that fired at 550 rounds per minute, two machine guns with a world-record firing rate, and 400 to 600 kilograms of bombs.¹

When creating this attack airplane the designer, Ilyushin, included a small defensive detail as well. The early model of the Il-2 was a two-seater. Pilot and gunner sat back to back: the pilot flew the plane and destroyed targets on the ground, while the gunner, with a .50-caliber machine gun, covered the hind hemisphere from attacking enemy fighters. Stalin personally called Ilyushin and asked to have the gunner with the machine gun removed, and make the Il-2 a one-seater. Stalin ordered the entire decrease in weight to be used to enlarge the bomb load and the fuel tank. Stalin needed the Il-2 for situations in which not a single enemy fighter would have the time to get off the ground.

The changes in design took several months. The problem was that the technology used in producing the Il-2 was extremely complex. The cabin was assembled from over twenty armored parts, which had a double bend, like fragments of a broken mug. The entire technology for producing the armored fuselage had to be replaced. This delayed the beginning of mass production of the Il-2. By the time of the German invasion, only 249 of them had been produced.

But Hitler did not have a single comparable plane. And the rest of the world had nothing comparable. Not a single nation in the world succeeded by the end of the war in creating anything equal to what the Red Army had at its beginning. Stalin had “only” 249 Il-2 planes, but Soviet industry was ready to produce them in any quantity. Even after the losses in the second half of 1941 of the greater part of aviation and motor factories, after the loss of all factories that produced aluminum, the Il-2 was still produced in the largest-scale series in the history of world aviation. The Il-2 did not become obsolete until the very end of the war, and entered history as the most mass-produced warplane of all time.

The Il-2 carried huge losses. The low-flying attack plane was not designed for air battle, and following Stalin’s orders it had no defensive weapons. Several days after the German invasion, Stalin personally called Ilyushin and demanded that the Il-2 be produced again as a two-seater: in defensive war, even an aggressor airplane needs to have defensive weapons. However, it was already impossible to return to the original designs without stopping production. And it was impossible to stop production. Therefore, the plane continued to be made as a one-seater. The Il-2 delivered a huge amount of destruction to the enemy, but it also was quick to perish. If the Il-2 had also had a rear gunner protecting the hind hemisphere, the Red Army in no time would have had thousands of armed airplanes of this type. Each of them could have completed tens and even hundreds of raids. The Il-2 attack-planes alone could have turned the tide of war. But there was no gunner, so in the early period of the war the Il-2 planes perished by the hundreds and thousands. In the years 1941 and 1942, an Il-2 plane in action could reasonably be expected to last only ten or thirteen flights before it was destroyed.²

Only by the end of 1942 was there some success in changing the finalized design of the plane. The Il-2 was once again produced as a two-person plane. Now the plane had a gunner with a large-caliber machine gun. However, this was still only a half-valid solution. There was never a return to the original design. The shooter’s cabin was added outside the armored compartment.³ The pilot was safe behind the armor, while the gunner was just covered by plywood. Of course he deflected the attacks of enemy fighters that came up from the tail, but he quickly perished himself, and then the Il-2 once again became defenseless. The best pilots trained before the war perished in the first months of war due to a lack of defensive weaponry on the Il-2. When defensive weaponry was finally installed on the planes, Il-2s were already operated by war-time pilots, trained in very specific ways. One of my mentors at the Military Academy, Air Force Major General Alexander Kuchumov, Hero of the Soviet Union, had arrived at the front in 1942. He had standard war-time training behind him—an hour and a half of flight time on the Il-2. The unique attack plane, the best of its kind, proved to be a particularly effective weapon. But it could have yielded even better results had well-trained pilots flown it. A few of the war-time trainees who survived became masters of their craft, heroes, and generals. And thousands perished after just a few missions.

But the problem was not that there were too few Il-2 planes. And the problem was not that they were bad planes. The problem was that the design of the plane was dictated by strategy, and the strategy was that of a sudden attack against the enemy’s air bases, after which the plan was to continue the war without resistance from the enemy’s air force. The Il-2 had to be used in a defensive war, when the enemy had air superiority. But this great airplane was created for an entirely different kind of war.

Stalin had a dive-bomber, the Pe-2. Hitler had good airplanes, but the Pe-2 surpassed any of them, in all the major characteristics. For example, the Pe-2 had a top speed of 75 km/h more than the best German bomber, the Ju-88, and 100 km/h more than the He-111. Prior to June 22, 1941, 490 Pe-2 planes had been produced,⁴ more than all the Ju-88s positioned on the entire Soviet-German front.

Stalin had three types of new fighters—the MiG-3, the LaGG-3, and the Yak-1. Each of them was equal or superior to the best German models. For example, the MiG-3 had a speed of 628 km/h at an altitude of 7,000 meters. Hitler had nothing similar in 1941. On June 22, 1941, Hitler had 1,129 fighters of all types on the Soviet-German front. Stalin had 1,309 of the newest MiG-3 model fighters alone.⁵ On top of this, Stalin also had 399 of the newest Yak-1 models and 322 LaGG-3s.⁶

Germany mastered the following air forces for the purpose of waging war against the USSR: 3,520 war planes of all kinds (bombers, fighters, reconnaissance, transport, and communications aircraft), plus 307 Finnish planes, 393 Romanian, 48 Hungarian—a total of 4,268 planes.⁷ The total number of aircraft available to Germany on June 1, 1941, was 6,852, including 823 reconnaissance planes, 2,017 single-engine fighters, 232 double-engine fighters, 2,141 bombers, 501 dive-bombers, 719 transport planes, 133 communications planes, and 286 planes belonging to the Navy.⁸ But Germany was simultaneously fighting on many fronts, from the North Atlantic to the Egyptian border.⁹ Against Stalin, Hitler could only send 2,510 airplanes, including the Hs-123, which had a speed of only 338 km/h, and assorted types of aircraft used for transport, communications, and medical purposes.¹⁰

Stalin had 2,769 of the newest models Il-2, Pe-2, MiG-3, Yak-1, and LaGG-3. But that was not all: Stalin did not just have five new types of planes, he had twelve. He also had the Ar-2, Er-2, Su-2, Pe-8, Yak-2, Yak-4, and Il-4. The Er-2 bomber had a range of 4,000 km. Hitler did not have such a bomber until the very end of the war. The Soviet bomber DB-3f (Il-4), released in 1940, had a range of 3,300 km with M-88 motors and a normal bomb cargo, while the Il-4, released in 1941 and equipped with M-88B motors, had a range of 3,380 km. Hitler did not have this kind of aircraft either. On September 7, 1936, Ilyushin's DB-3 bomber raised 2,000 kg to an altitude of 11,005 meters. This record (among others) was officially registered by the FAI (*Fédération Aéronautique Internationale*) and remained a record throughout the entire war. Not a single dual-engine airplane in the world could repeat this performance. This record was beaten only after the war, in 1946, and not by the B-17 "Flying Fortress" but by the four-engine "Super Fortress," the B-29. How many bombers did Stalin have? The DB-3fs alone, on June 22, 1941, numbered 1,846. This is more than the number of all types of bombers used by Hitler to attack the Soviet Union. In other words, Stalin had more of the newest planes than Hitler had new and old ones combined.

Of course, Stalin had obsolete planes as well. Aside from the twelve newest models, Stalin also had the TB-3 and SB bombers, and the I-16 and I-153 fighters. There is something to be said for these airplanes. Stalin had 541 four-engine TB-3 bombers.¹¹ Historian V. B. Shavrov said: "This airplane of A. N. Tupolev's design belongs to [the] category of the most remarkable planes not just of their own time period. It was the first four-motor cantilever monoplane bomber with engines that were installed inside the wings. Its design became a prototype for all similar airplanes and planes of various designations."¹² The TB-3 became part of the inventory in 1932. It was produced in series until 1938. In total, 819 airplanes of this type were built. Its crew had eight members. It had four motors. The range of its flight,

with a normal bomb cargo, was up to 2,250 km. Its defense weapons were eight machine guns. Its bomb load was two to four tons. In 1941, all these characteristics placed the TB-3 among the top class of airplanes in the world. What about speed? One must concede that the speed was not too great. In 1932, when the airplane was being integrated into the army, the speed seemed unthinkable, but by 1941 concepts of speed had changed. The maximum speed of the TB-3 was 288 km/h.

Let's compare Stalin's "obsolete" heavy TB-3 bomber with Hitler's best heavy bomber. Well, Hitler did not have any new heavy bombers. (A heavy-bomber development program was cancelled after the 1936 death of its proponent, Walther Wever.) There is nothing to compare with. Then let us compare the characteristics of the "obsolete" TB-3 with the characteristics of the best, though obsolete, German heavy bombers. But Hitler did not have any obsolete heavy bombers either, not a single one. He had, of course, dreams, ideas. He had sample models. But nothing went past the experimental stage, so in 1941 Hitler did not have a single bomber with four engines. Hitler in 1941 did not have a single bomber with a range of 4,000 kilometers. Hitler in 1941 did not have a single bomber with a bomb-carrying capacity of 4 tons. The TB-3 had little speed. But Hitler's heavy bombers had no speed, because they did not exist.

Stalin had the "obsolete" SB bomber (mid-range). At approximately the same bomb load and range of flight, the SB surpassed the German Ju-87 bomber by about 70 km/h.¹³ By June 22, 1941, the Germans had deployed 324 Ju-87s as a part of their assault against the Soviet Union; Stalin had 6,656 SB planes.¹⁴

On top of the newest fighters, Stalin had the "obsolete" I-16. The situation on June 22, 1941, was that the air force of the western border regions of the USSR alone had at its disposal a total of 4,226 fighters, of which 1,635 were I-16s. Add to that another 344 I-16s in the air forces of the Northern, Baltic, and Black Sea fleets, to a total of 1,979.¹⁵ Here is what British pilot Alfred Price, who in his lifetime flew in over forty types of airplanes and spent over four thousand hours in the air, thought about this airplane. His opinion of the "obsolete" Soviet fighter: "The most powerful weapon among the series of fighters in the world in September 1939 was possessed by the Russian I-16, which twice surpassed the Bf-109e and almost three times the 'Spitfire-1.' Among all prewar fighters in the world, the I-16 was unique in the sense that it alone had an armor protection around the pilot. Those who think that the Russians were backward peasants before the Second World War and only moved forward under the influence of using German expertise need to remember the facts."¹⁶ To this it must be added that by 1941 the I-16 had not and could not have become obsolete.

Starting in 1937, the I-16 was produced with a cannon and machine-gun armament. The legendary British Spitfire in 1940, during the course of the Battle of Britain, had no cannon. The great American Mustang and Thunderbolt fighters even by the end of the war had no cannon. The I-16 had an amazing lifting power of 553 horsepower per ton of weight. This was a record statistic, and not a single warplane in the world had such power. By the end of the war, not a single plane in the world had reached such a result—the Spitfire Mk-IX and Bf-109K came close, but only when the engine was working in an extreme regime that could not be turned on for longer than seven minutes.

The I-16 surpassed any German fighter and most other airplanes of the world in terms of its longevity. All German fighters had an extremely vulnerable coolant system. If just one bullet hit the radiator, pipeline, pump, or any other part of the cooling system, the liquid

leaked out and the motor overheated and stopped working. On the other hand, the I-16 had a coolant system that was not vulnerable to such direct hits, because it was air-cooled. That engine was based on the American Wright Cyclone design.

The I-16 was inferior to the German fighter in speed. The I-16 type 28 had a speed near ground of 427 km/h, while the Bf-109 E-1 flew at 464 km/h, and the Bf-109 E-3 flew at 540 km/h. At an altitude of 5 kilometers, the I-16 type 29 flew at 470 km/h,¹⁷ while the Bf-109 E-1 and E-3 flew at 532 and 555 km/h, respectively.¹⁸ But the I-16 surpassed the Bf-109 in vertical maneuvers and greatly surpassed it in horizontal maneuvers. The I-16 could do a turn in 17 seconds, while the Bf-109 took 25 seconds. If the German fighter did not wish to engage the I-16 in battle, it could always evade it. The Bf-109 evaded battle using its speed, while the I-16 used its maneuverability.

It's interesting to point out what Germany's own fighter pilots thought of the I-16's capabilities: "The I-16, with an able pilot inside, was a dangerous enemy. German pilots did not at all consider the I-16 an easy target. Even though they could almost always win the initiative in air combat against the *Ishachok* ("little donkey"—a Russian nickname for the I-16), the pilots tried to avoid maneuver-based combats against Russian veterans. Among themselves, the Germans used to say that one should not corner a rat, referring, of course, to the plane's nickname, *Rata*, earned on the Spanish front. If the Messerschmitt pilots did not follow this principle, the fight could turn out very badly for them indeed."¹⁹ From 1934 to 1942, 10,292 I-16 units were produced. This number includes 3,189 I-16 type 15s (UTI-4), the training versions of the aircraft. So the total of combat ready I-16 units produced was 7,103.²⁰

Aside from this plane, Stalin also had the I-153. There were 3,437 of them produced. This plane had lower speed than the I-16, but it had phenomenal maneuverability. It climbed to a height of 5 kilometers in exactly a minute less than the Bf-109. The I-153 did a turn in 12 seconds. It had time to make two full turns faster than the Me-109 did one.

Why then in the first stage of the war did the Soviet air force lose air superiority from day one? Why did the Germans have the advantage in the air, given that their air force lost out to the Soviet air force both in plane quantity and plane quality? The answer is simple: the majority of Soviet pilots, including fighter pilots, were not taught the dogfights. Soviet aviation was oriented to conduct one grandiose, sudden, aggressive operation, in which the Soviet air force in one raid would crush the enemy's air force on the ground and claim air superiority. Already in 1929 in the Soviet journal *Voyna I Revolutsia* (War and Revolution), the fundamental article "The Early Period of the War" made the conclusion that was later repeated by Soviet air force directives, including ones from 1940 and 1941: "It seems to be extremely advantageous to show initiative and be the first to attack the enemy. He who exhibits initiative by attacking his enemy's air bases with his air force can later count on air superiority."²¹

Precisely for this reason Soviet aviation in 1941 was concentrated along the borders. The field air base of the 123rd fighter air force regiment, for example, was located only two kilometers away from the German border. In a war situation, this saves fuel during takeoff in the direction of the enemy. In the 123rd regiment, just like in many others, the majority of altitude gain after takeoff was to be acquired over German territory. Ten years after these events, Major V. Khmelev, then an eyewitness, described them: "The bomber aviation air bases [were] located no further than 80 km from the new German-Soviet border. It was at that time clear to every Soviet soldier and officer that the entire Red Army was feverishly

preparing for aggressive operations of unheard-of dimensions.”²² But Hitler attacked first, and from the first day of the German invasion many Soviet air bases found themselves under the tracks of German tanks. Aside from the huge losses in planes, entire air bases—with unbelievable reserves of fuel, ammunition, and other supplies, without which conducting war was impossible—were lost to the enemy.

13

Soviet Airborne Assault Troops and Their Mission

In the battles to come, we shall operate on the territory of the enemy. That is prescribed by our rules.

—COLONEL A. I. RODIMTSEV, SPEECH AT THE EIGHTEENTH
CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY, 1939

Airborne assault troops are designed for action in sudden, decisive offensive operations. “The use of paratroops is pointless unless they are part of an offensive operation,” said one military newspaper in 1940.¹ *The Field Rules of the Red Army for 1936 (PU-36)* states: use of airborne assault troops can only be made in the course of offensive operations and only in conjunction with regular troops advancing against the enemy.²

The Soviet Union was the first nation in the world in which airborne assault troops were created. They were created in 1930, before Hitler came to power in Germany. Only two other nations developed airborne troops before World War II: Germany, in 1936, and Italy. By the beginning of the war Hitler had four thousand parachutists and Italy had trained seven hundred parachutists.

Stalin took the lead in developing airborne warfare. “By the end of 1933 the Red Army had one air assault brigade, four mobile paratroops units, twenty-nine separate battalions, and several companies that altogether numbered about ten thousand men.”³

At the beginning of the war, the Soviet Union had more than one million trained parachutists, according to the official Communist Party newspaper, *Pravda*, on August 18, 1940. In light of declassified documents it is clear that this was a deliberate underestimation of the real number, which arguably was closer to two million parachutists. Never before had the world seen such large-scale preparations for offensive war. To calm fears of Soviet aggression, *Pravda* lowered the number of Russian paratroopers to one million.

In the 1930s, the Soviet Union went through a true parachute craze. In less than two years (from April 1934 until February 1936), 427,000 parachutists were trained in Ukraine alone.⁴ Not a single city park was without a parachute tower, and a parachutist’s badge became a necessary symbol of manhood for all young men. However, it was not easy to earn it. The

badge was awarded for jumping out of an airplane, but only to those who beforehand had completed tests in running, swimming, shooting, throwing hand grenades for long distances and with accuracy, climbing obstacle courses, learning to use gas masks, and other military tests. Jumping from an airplane was the culmination of the training of an airborne soldier.

In the 1930s, western regions of the USSR were shaken up by grandiose military maneuvers. Only one theme was developed in each maneuver—"Deep Penetration"—a sudden attack by gigantic masses of tanks deep into "enemy" territory. The scenario always simple but menacing. In all training exercises, the sudden attack of land troops was always preceded by a surprise attack of Soviet aviation on the "enemy" air bases. This was followed by a drop of the paratroops to take over the air bases. Following the first wave of parachutists, a second wave of assault troops, with heavy weapons, landed on the air bases.

In 1935 at the Kiev military district training maneuvers 1,200 paratroopers were dropped, followed by the landing of 2,500 assault troops with heavy weapons, including artillery, armored cars, and tanks. In 1936, in Byelorussia, the same invasion technique was practiced. A parachute force of 1,800 men was dropped and followed by 5,700 assault troops with heavy weapons. In the same year, during attack maneuvers in the Moscow military district, the 84th Rifle Division was fully deployed by airborne transport. In 1938, six new air assault brigades—the 201st, 202nd, 204th, 211th, 212th, and 214th—were created.⁵ In total the six brigades consisted of 18,000 men.⁶

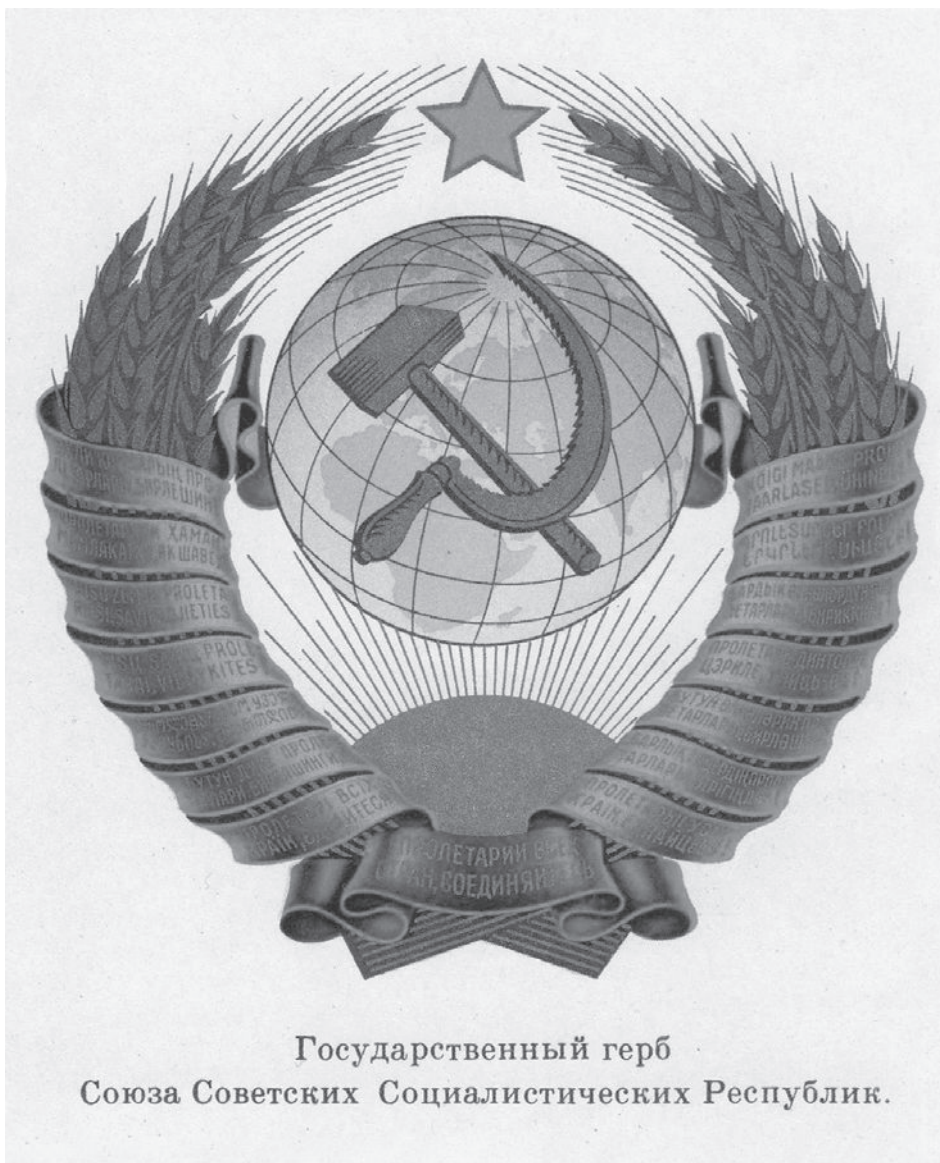
In 1939, Stalin ordered the destruction of guerrilla warfare bases and partisan units that were designed for action on Soviet territory in the event of enemy aggression. Instead, Stalin ordered the formation of new paratroop forces. In the Moscow military district three regiments consisting of three battalions each and several separate battalions, five hundred to seven hundred parachutists each, were formed.⁷ In April 1941 five air assault corps were secretly formed in the Soviet Union.⁸ All the corps were stationed in the western regions of the Soviet Union. Each corps included an administration, staff, service formations, three air assault brigades, an artillery battalion, a separate tank battalion (of fifty-four tanks), and other formations. Each corps numbered 10,419 men.⁹

Twice awarded the title of "Hero of the Soviet Union," Colonel General Alexander Rodimtsev, who in May 1941 was commander of the 5th Air Assault Brigade of the 3rd Paratroops Corps, testified about those events in his memoirs. At that time, Rodimtsev was a colonel with combat experience in Spain, where he had received his first Hero of the Soviet Union medal. Rodimtsev recalled:

I had to serve with excellently trained warriors, the best of our Soviet youth. . . . The officers were mostly experienced parachutists: each of them [had] made from fifty to one hundred jumps. The brigade consisted of four separate paratroops battalions, a separate artillery battalion, a sergeants' school, a separate reconnaissance company, a separate machine gun company, [and] a separate communications company. The brigade was fully equipped with weapons and necessary supplies, as well as parachutes. An excellent collective of officers, disciplined and friendly. Later my first impression was confirmed. Every one of them showed extreme courage and selflessness in battle for the Motherland. The brigade trained according to schedule. . . . I was pleased by the hard-working nature of my parachutists, their courage and their will power, which was easy to feel amongst that confident youth. . . . All the time was used for preparations for jumps and [for the] jumps themselves.



Stalin, a terrorist and robber from the Caucasus also known as Koba, Ivanov, Vassiliev, Chizhikov, Ivanovich, Dzhugashvili, Bessoshvili, Salin.



The coat of arms of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics. There are no borders on the map because the whole world was to become part of the Soviet Union through wars and revolutions.



The Palace of Soviets was supposed to be the tallest building in the world at five hundred meters high. It was designed for the ceremony of accepting new republics joining the Soviet Union, but in 1941 construction was halted and the frame dismantled. The steel beams were used to construct anti-tank defenses near Moscow.



Joachim von Ribbentrop signs the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact dividing Poland between the Soviet Union and Germany. Hitler was not aware that France and England would declare war against Germany after he attacked Poland. But Stalin knew it. It was part of his plan for the conquest of Europe.



Stalin shakes Ribbentrop's hand. Next to Stalin is Marshal Shaposhnikov, Chief of Staff of the Red Army, who coined the slogan, "Mobilization is war." On August 19, 1939, Stalin ordered secret mobilization.



Ribbentrop brings great news to Hitler: "We can start the war against Poland." They do not realize they have fallen into Stalin's trap.



Soviet and German officers looking at maps dividing Poland after the invasion, September 1939.



NKVD and SS officers, now brothers in arms after the division of Poland.



Traditionally, history presents Stalin as a victim of Hitler's aggression. But at the time of the signing of the pact in August 1939 the world saw them as equal villains. Bulgarian cartoonist Ivan Beshkov saw them with daggers drawn against each other.



German General Hans Guderian exchanges smiles with the Soviet Commander S. Krivosheev at a border meeting dividing Poland. Note how the officers keep their hands behind their backs as in the cartoon. Krivosheev ended the war in 1945 in Berlin as a lieutenant general of Soviet armored forces.



On September 28, 1939, a detailed map of the division of Poland was signed by Stalin and Ribbentrop. Stalin wrote the first letters of his name then stopped and continued again with larger letters, unable to hide his excitement. Stalin, who held no state office at the time, should have let Molotov, the foreign minister, sign.



On September 29, 1939, Nikita Khrushchev, then a Politburo member, inspected the new border on the river San. General I. Tyulenev, accompanying Khrushchev, wrote that Khrushchev said, "Let the Germans do their evil crimes and then we will come as liberators."



The Soviet official map of the German war against Poland with the territory occupied by the Soviet Union left unmarked, as if there was no Soviet participation in the war against Poland.

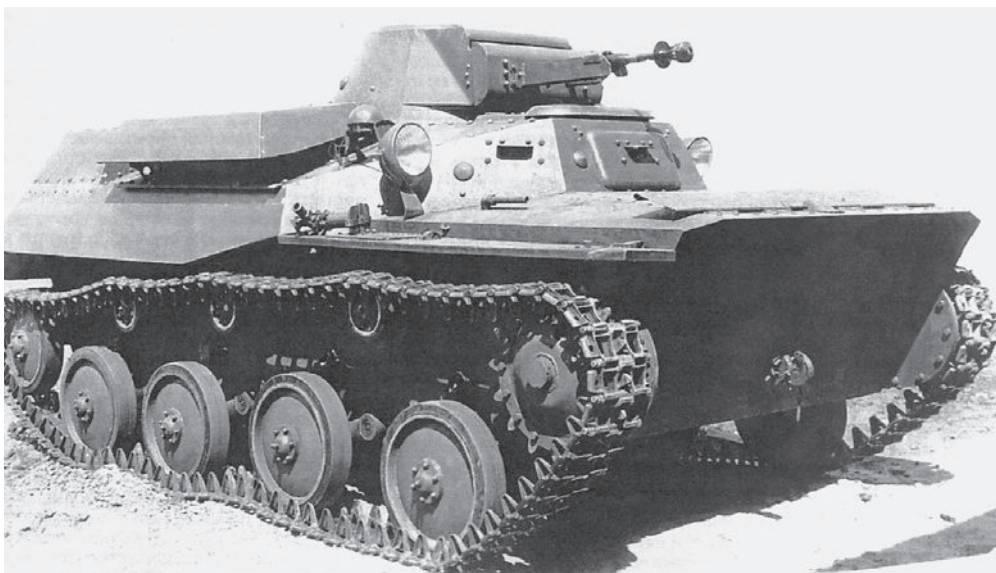
Soviet troops preparing for the “liberation” of Europe. It is difficult to distinguish them from German troops.



Soviet oil delivery to Hitler. Without Soviet supplies of oil, cotton, grain, magnesium, chrome, copper, tin, nickel, vanadium, wolfram, and molybdenum, Hitler would have been unable to conquer Europe.



The Soviet BT tank, with high speed, high maneuverability, and light armor. A new tank for a new kind of warfare: lightning offensive operations. It was of limited use in defensive warfare.



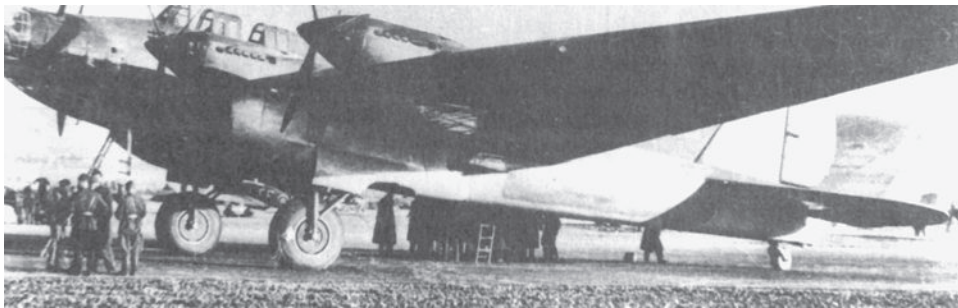
The amphibious T-40 tank. The Soviet Union was the only country in the world which by 1941 had amphibious tanks, which can be used only in an offensive war.



The KV-1 heavy tank. The Soviet Union was the only country in the world which by 1941 had heavy tanks in its arsenal. The Soviet heavy tanks could sustain up to twenty to thirty direct hits from German anti-tank guns. Once these tanks crossed the border nothing could stop them. Hitler was fortunate in attacking at the moment these tanks were still being moved forward on railroad cars.



The KV-2 heavy tank. By the end of June 1941 German frontline officers reported that the Russians had tanks with powerful engines, wide tracks, impenetrable armor, and six-inch guns that used 48-kg (105.6-lb) projectiles. Berlin did not believe these reports.



By 1936 the Soviet Union created the TB-7 strategic bomber, which was capable of reaching altitudes where anti-aircraft fire and enemy interceptors could not reach them. In 1942 the Soviet foreign minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, used a TB-7 to fly over German occupied territories without fear of being attacked while en route to Great Britain and the USA. The TB-7 had the capacity to carry 11,000-pound bombs. Before 1941 Soviet industry had the capacity to produce a thousand of these planes, but Stalin ordered a halt to mass production of the TB-7. By the summer of 1941 only seventeen of these bombers were built. Stalin had decided he did not want to destroy European cities, factories, and ports; he wanted to seize them undamaged and for that purpose he needed different aircraft.

The 212th Air Assault Brigade, secretly transferred from the Far East, trained next to Rodimtsev's brigade in "conditions that were closer to actual battle conditions." Rodimtsev said its soldiers and commanders each had one hundred and sometimes even up to two hundred jumps, while the commander, Colonel I. I. Zatevakhin had at least three hundred jumps.¹⁰

Rodimtsev's account was mirrored in the memoirs of Colonel I. G. Starchak, titled *Battle from the Sky*, and by General A. S. Zhadov, who in 1941 was a major general in command of the 4th Air Assault Corps.¹¹ Zhadov attested: "All brigade and corps formations were manned with well-trained personnel, supplies, and weapons."¹² All five corps were in a state of full readiness for deployment.

The air assault corps quickly graduated from general battle preparations to very concrete ones. After June 13, 1941, the appropriate orders were issued and the final preparations for war were completed. Tens of thousands of parachutes were folded for action in the loading areas of the airbases. The air assault corps were issued powerful artillery and even battalions of light amphibious tanks. All paratroop corps were stationed so close to the borders that they could be deployed on enemy territory without additional regrouping. All corps conducted intensive preparations for an impending landing. All corps were concentrated in the forests, away from public view. The 4th and 5th Corps could, without regrouping, be used against Germany, the 3rd against Romania. The 1st and 2nd Corps were to be dropped in Germany, Romania, or in Czechoslovakia or Austria, in order to cut off the petroleum routes that ran through the mountains from Romania to Germany.

On June 12, 1941, the Command Staff for Air Assault Troops was created in the Red Army, with plans for an additional five air assault corps to be formed by August 1941. Their creation was decided upon in May 1941.¹³ Aside from the five corps, five separate air assault brigades were also formed. Altogether, in the summer of 1941 Stalin had ten air assault corps (three brigades each), six separate brigades, and several separate regiments.

Aside from the air assault corps, brigades, and regiments, a significant number of parachutist landing battalions were created as units included with the regular Soviet infantry. Marshal Ivan Bagramian relates that in the beginning of 1941 the 55th Rifle Corps, which was located close to the Romanian border, conducted intensive training for several parachutist battalions.

In addition to parachute formations, several regular rifle divisions were also prepared for transfer by air, in those days a radical shift in deployment of troops. On June 21, 1941, the day before Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, the Soviet army was practicing airborne offensive operations, proof of how far they were from any defensive war strategy.

To deliver hundreds of thousands of paratroops the Red Army needed an air armada of transport planes and gliders. Stalin understood this perfectly, which is why the parachute craze of the 1930s was accompanied by a glider craze. Soviet gliders and gliding hobbyists were up to world standards. By the beginning of World War II thirteen of the eighteen world records in gliding were held by the Soviet Union.¹⁴ The best Soviet warplane designers were also busy designing gliders. The future creator of the first satellite, Sergei Korolev, was asked to develop gliders.

The offensive military orientation of Soviet gliding was not disputable. Even before Hitler came to power, the USSR had already created the first cargo glider, the G-63, designed by B. Uralpov. Then the USSR created heavy gliders, capable of carrying trucks. Designer

P. Gorokhovsky created a rubber inflatable glider. After being deployed in the enemy's rear, several of these gliders could be loaded into one transport plane and returned to their own territory for repeated use.

Soviet generals dreamed not only of dropping a multitude of paratroops into Western Europe, but also hundreds, possibly thousands, of tanks. Designers eagerly searched for the most simple and inexpensive ways to realize these dreams. Oleg Antonov, the man who later created the largest cargo warplane in the world, suggested adding wings and empennage (a tail assembly) to a regular tank, using the body of the tank as the fuselage of the hybrid. This system received the name KT—*Krylatyi Tank* ("winged tank"). The gears from the steering were connected to the cannon of the tank. The tank's crew could guide the flight from the tank cabin, by turning the turret and barrel. The KT was amazingly simple. Of course, the flight risk in the tank was, to put it mildly, higher than normal, but human life in the Soviet Union cost less than adding wings to a tank. Before landing, the tank's engine was turned on and the caterpillar tracks launched to maximum speed. The KT landed on its tracks and slowed down. On the ground, the wings and empennage were dropped, and the hybrid once again became a regular tank. Oleg Antonov's winged tank was not ready at the beginning of the war, and since the war did not start the way Stalin had planned, the winged tanks became just as useless as the million silk parachutes folded neatly for an attack against Germany and Romania.¹⁵

The Soviet Union entered World War II with the highest number of glider pilots in the world. In 1939 alone 30,000 people were simultaneously training to become pilot gliders. The pilots' skills frequently reached the highest levels. For example, in 1940 there was a demonstration of eleven flying gliders towed by just one plane. In the late 1930s, more than ten design bureaus in the Soviet Union were competing fiercely to create the best military cargo glider. O. Antonov, aside from the winged tank, created the large military glider A-7. V. Gribovsky designed the magnificent military glider G-11. D. Kolesnikov created a glider for carrying twenty soldiers—KTs-20, while G. Korbula worked on creating a giant glider.

In January 1940, by a decision of the Central Committee (meaning by Stalin's orders) a directorate for the production of military cargo gliders was created within the structure of the Ministry of Aviation, the People's Commissariat (Russian abbreviation—*Narkomat*) of Aviation Industry. The year 1940 was spent on intensive preparations, and from spring 1941 factories run by this directorate began the mass production of cargo gliders. On April 23, 1941, a decision of the Party Central Committee and the Council of Ministers ordered the Commissariat of Aviation Industry to accelerate the production of an 11-seat glider, with a deadline of May 15, 1941, and of a 20-seat glider by July 1, 1941. Stalin and Molotov personally signed the order.

On June 16, 1941, General Zhukov sent out a "Memorandum from the Chief of Staff of the Red Army to the People's Commissariat of Soviet Aviation Industry," # 567240, which ordered 7,500 gliders to be manufactured in 1941–42.¹⁶

The gliders that were produced in the spring of 1941 had to be used in the summer of 1941, or, at the latest, in the early fall. Unlike ordinary warplanes, gliders had light and fragile bodies and wings. They could not be parked outdoors, and all available hangars were already full with previously produced gliders. Keeping a huge cargo glider outdoors, during fall winds and rains, and winter cold and snow, would harm it beyond repair. The mass production of cargo gliders in 1941 meant they were intended for use in 1941. If Stalin had intended to

drop hundreds of thousands of his airborne troops into Central and Western Europe in 1942, the mass production of gliders should have been scheduled for spring of 1942.

Gliders deliver cargo and groups of assault troops without parachutes, while assault forces with parachutes are delivered to the enemy's rear by cargo warplanes. The best cargo warplane in the world at the beginning of World War II was the legendary American Douglas DC-3. This plane set the record for durability—fifty-five years of use. It was an extraordinary plane for its time.

The American Douglas DC-3, although under a different name (PS-84),¹⁷ formed the core of Soviet war-transport aviation. In 1938, the U.S. government sold to Stalin the production license and the necessary amount of the most complex equipment for its production. Giants like Fokker and Mitsubishi also purchased licenses for the production of Douglas aircraft, but could not produce them in mass without parts from America. Soviet industry, on the other hand, was able to start mass production using Soviet parts—an important step in the field of cargo aircraft. Before the war, the Soviet Union bought twenty Douglas units from the United States, and in 1939 six identical aircraft were produced on Soviet soil. In 1940, fifty-one aircraft were produced; in 1941, 237 aircraft. During the entire war 2,419 DC-3s or Soviet PS-84/Li-2 planes came out of Soviet factories.¹⁸

Aside from the DC-3, the Soviet Union had several hundred TB-3 strategic bombers, which could also be used as cargo planes.¹⁹ All large-scale drops of paratroops in the 1930s were done from the TB-3. There were enough of them to lift several thousand paratroopers and heavy weapons, including tanks, armored cars, and artillery.

A Soviet air armada of gliders and transport planes would be easy prey for enemy fighters if they did not secure complete air superiority. Soviet generals understood all this perfectly. The most important document that guided the actions of the Red Army in war was the Field Order (*Polevoy Ustav*—PU). At that time, the Field Order of 1939 was in action—PU-39. The order clearly stated that to conduct a “deep penetration” and a mass drop of air assault corps, the Soviet air force must dominate the skies. This field order, as well as air force battle orders and “instruction on independent use of aviation,” foresaw the conduct in the beginning of the war of a massive strategic operation that would crush the air force of the enemy. According to the plans of Soviet commanders, the air forces of several fronts, naval aviation, and fighter aviation were to participate in such an operation.

In December 1940 the highest-ranking commanders of the Red Army, at a secret meeting with Stalin and members of the Politburo, discussed these operations in great detail. The euphemism for a Soviet surprise attack on German air forces was “special operations at the initial stage of war.” The commander of Soviet aviation, General P. V. Rychagov, stressed the necessity of carefully concealing the preparations of Soviet aviation for carrying out a surprise attack, in order to “find all enemy air forces on their bases.”²⁰ Obviously, it would be impossible in a wartime situation to “find all enemy air forces on their bases.” It is only possible during peacetime, when the enemy does not suspect any danger. It is impossible to first start a war and then carry out a surprise attack on the majority of enemy air bases. It is possible to carry out an attack during peacetime, but such an attack will mean war.

Stalin created so many air assault troops that it was possible to use them only in one scenario: an air attack and a massive invasion. The Red Army had to begin the war, suddenly and treacherously, by an attack of its air force against the enemy's air bases. Thousands of paratroops would be dropped to seize and control key bases and strategic sites. Any other

scenario was not viable. Instead, it was Hitler who carried out a preemptive strike. The Communists' strategy to strike the first blow was aborted. Stalin's carefully designed plans to mount a massive offensive air assault became irrelevant in the desperate rush to fight a defensive war.

For many years after World War II it was not clear what had happened to the Soviet airborne forces. A Western military historian writing in 1978 noted: "In June 1941, when Germany invaded Russia, the latter had more than one million trained parachutists. It seems extraordinary that the investment this represented was not used constructively during the war."²¹ For Soviet paratroopers, it was immediately clear why Stalin's "extraordinary investment" was not used "constructively." In 1941 the chief of staff of the Southwestern front, Lieutenant General M. A. Purkaev, astutely explained the reality created by the German surprise attack. He told Colonel A. I. Rodimtsev: "Yes, the situation now is such, comrade Rodimtsev, that it is easy to find one's way behind the enemy's lines without a paratroop drop. Some of our units and even large formations are already encircled."²²

In defensive war there is nowhere to jump. One must stop enemy tanks. All five air assault corps of the first wave were sent to stem the German tide. However, everything had already been prepared for the now-useless landing. Parachutes had been delivered to the air base loading areas. Commander of the 4th Air Assault Corps Zhadov recalled how he summoned Captain A. I. Goryachev, the aide to the chief of operations sector of the corps staff: "Do you know, comrade captain, what is gold?" He was dumbfounded by such an unanticipated question, but nevertheless answered: 'I have an idea, but I never had any gold.' 'Not true,' I said to him. 'A parachute was given to every Red Army soldier and commander. This is our nation's gold. Do you know where there are thousands of parachutes sitting out in the open? In the forest, one kilometer east of the river Berezina. Organize the transportation of this precious material to the rear.'²³

Captain Goryachev carried out the order. He found trucks, and under machine-gun fire from the advancing Germans, brought the parachutes to a safe place, for which he was rewarded with a medal. But these parachutes were never used again.

An airborne force is a fine precision tool in war. Using it as a defense force instead of regular infantry is to squander a precious asset. The paratroop units do not have the same heavy and powerful weapons as regular infantry, so their resistance in defense is much lower than that of regular infantry. Using paratroops to fight against tanks is the same as transporting bricks in a Ferrari race car—expensive and ineffective. But it was necessary to fight back, and the air assault corps were sent to the trenches to stop the tanks. Ten air assault corps, 100,000 men—150,000 if we count the separate brigades and reserve regiments. But where were the million paratroopers mentioned by *Pravda*?

In the spring of 1942 the Red Army suffered several crushing defeats at the same time: the 39th Army of Lieutenant General I. I. Maslennikov was surrounded and perished near Rzhev; the 33rd Army of Lieutenant General M. G. Efremov perished after being surrounded near Vyazma; the 2nd Shock Army of Lieutenant General A. A. Vlassov was cut off and encircled. Those who did not follow Vlassov's example and surrender, perished. The Crimean front was broken, during which the 44th, 47th, and 51st armies perished; and in the battle of Kharkov the 6th, 9th, 28th, and 57th armies were destroyed, along with seven separate tank and cavalry corps and a significant number of divisions, brigades, and regiments. Thousands of tanks and weapons and ample strategic resources were lost, and hundreds of thousands of

soldiers and officers were killed or taken prisoner. The Soviet strategic front in the south was broken along a vast stretch of territory, and the German troops, not meeting any opposition, made a gigantic thrust forward with two targets at once: the Caucasus and Stalingrad.

The loss of the Caucasus and its oil would have meant defeat for Stalin. The fall of Stalingrad would have meant the same thing: oil was transported through the Caspian Sea up the Volga. The easiest way to cut off the oil artery was to take Stalingrad. All that was needed was to get to the banks of the Volga, to set up a stronghold there, and to sink all incoming petroleum barges. Soviet troops were retreating in a disorganized manner. More simply put, they ran. Stalin issued the threatening order No. 227 that introduced anti-retreat detachments and penal battalions. The detachments were NKVD squads with machine guns, positioned behind the troops, and in the event of unauthorized retreat they fired on their own soldiers. Commanders who did not show enough tenacity in combat had their rank signs torn away and were sent to penal battalions as regular soldiers to expiate their guilt with their blood.

The demoralized Soviet troops could not be stopped by monstrous orders. Fresh reserves were needed. But regular reserves had already been used up during the winter offensive and in unsuccessful attempts to break through the Leningrad blockade and prevent defeat in Kharkov and in the Crimea. The focal point of the eastern front, the small town of Rzhev, was also the scene of heavy casualties.

Stalin could only be saved by a miracle, but a miracle happened. Two fresh and fully manned Guards corps, the 10th and the 11th, arrived and formed a defense wall before the German Fourth Tank Army that advanced in the direction of the Caucasus. Their appearance at the most critical moment precisely where they were badly needed saved the day. The offensive was halted and exhausted troops were able to catch their breath and regroup. Soviet commanders reinstated order and stability, and turned a rout into an organized retreat that soon stabilized the front lines for prolonged battles that led to a counteroffensive.

There were nine Guards rifle corps in the Red Army then, but they had long since been drawn into battle, exhausted and depleted.²⁴ It was impossible to take those remaining away from the fronts where they were fighting. So, where did the two new and fresh corps come from?

Another miracle occurred in the Stalingrad region. At that moment, the Red Army had the 31st Guards Rifle Division. It was impossible to pull it out of the “slaughterhouses” in which it was trapped and send it to Stalingrad. Yet suddenly near Stalingrad appeared the fresh, new 32nd Guards Rifle Division. Immediately, it was followed by similar divisions—the 33rd, 34th, 35th, and 36th. Both Hitler and Stalin were throwing fresh troops into the battle for Stalingrad. As the stakes rose, Stalin trumped with an ace: he introduced into the battle the 1st Guards Army, under Lieutenant General F. I. Golikov, which had five Guards rifle divisions: the 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st. Before, there had been Guards regiments and brigades, divisions and corps. This was the entire 1st Guards Army, and not just any army, but a fresh one, fully staffed and with the best men, and a former GRU chief in command. Was Stalin a magician? No one knew where they were coming from, these Guards armies with serial numbers all in a row, just like brand-new money, crisp bills in a pack.

The war followed its course, and the Guards miracles continued. In the summer of 1943, a violent battle began on the Kursk bulge. The enemy carried out two extremely powerful attacks in converging directions. They were not successful in breaking through the Soviet defenses. There were many reasons, including the brilliant work done by Soviet intelligence,

which uncovered the enemy plan, and the Red Army's superiority in terms of quality and quantity of technology. But miracles also played a part. The German attack from the north was met by the 13th Army of the Central front. Among its components appeared the great 18th Guards Rifle Corps, staffed with the best men. And on the southern face of the Kursk bulge, the unbreakable Guards divisions suddenly appeared, as if from under the ground.

After deflecting the enemy's attacks, Soviet troops shifted to a decisive offensive. And once again, miracles occurred. A strategic reserve was introduced into battle on the Steppe front, in which was included the fully manned 4th Guards Army, staffed with the best soldiers and officers, and the top caliber 5th Guards Army fought bravely alongside them. But the war continued to devour lives. Whenever a crisis would arise a miracle occurred. Stalin always had some fresh select Guards division, corps, or even entire army in reserve.

The last Guards miracle occurred in March 1945 in Hungary, during the course of the Battle of Balaton when the Germans mounted their last powerful counterattack.

By the end of the war, Stalin was desperately short of troops. As Joseph Goebbels noted in his diary on March 3, 1945: "Their troops are extremely well armed, but they suffer more and more from lack of people. Their attacking infantry consists mostly of eastern workers and Poles, taken from our eastern regions."

In the beginning of 1945 the Red Army captured the last significant source of oil in Hungary, after which Germany was destined to crumble. Hitler urgently stopped his counteroffensive against American troops in the Ardennes and sent his main attack force, the Sixth Tank Army of the SS, to Hungary. There, in the Lake Balaton region, began his desperate last offensive to regain oil. A critical situation faced the Soviets. At that moment Stalin once again threw his trump ace on the table: he ordered fresh reserves, the 9th Guards Army, consisting of the 37th, 38th, and 39th Guards Rifle Corps, into battle. Each corps had three Guards rifle divisions. The Ninth Guards Army was fully manned by elite soldiers and officers. The Ninth Guards Army delivered a classic attack to the flank and rear of the SS Sixth Tank Army. Then the Ninth Guards Army continued its advance to Vienna, and through Prague to reach the Elbe River in Germany, where they joined forces with the Americans.

Where did Stalin get the reserves? Lieutenant General of the KGB V. A. Kirpichenko, who was a private in the war, recalled: "I served in the air assault troops-elite. We were trained and then practiced continually, but sent into action only in January 1945, not as airborne assault troops but as ordinary infantry. We broke the German blockade around Balaton, and earned Stalin's praise by stopping the last German offensive during the course of the war. To achieve this, we lost half of our troops."²⁵

Stalin never had the opportunity to use his paratroopers for his planned sudden attack against Germany to start the war. The Germans' surprise attack established a significant presence in the air, preventing the effective deployment of Soviet paratroops and glider assault troops. Stalin's airborne offensive was doomed. However, Stalin kept the paratroops in reserve. When crisis situations arose, he gave these elite units the honored title of Guards and sent them to fight German tanks as regular infantry soldiers.²⁶

That explains the "miracle."

About the Brilliant Military Leader Tukhachevski

After the unheard-of violence conducted by the Bolsheviks against the very people whom they betrayed and sentenced to starvation and death, there was no way back. The only thing left was to run fast to their own grave, under the party flag and Stalin's leadership.

—V. RAPOPORT, YU. ALEXEYEV, AND IZMENA RODINE,

BETRAYAL OF THE MOTHERLAND

In 1937, Stalin carried out an assault on the high command of the Red Army. There are countless legends about this period. This is what they sound like:

Marshal Tukhachevski was a great strategist. Tukhachevski proposed a modernization of the army and insisted on rearmament, but Stalin foolishly declined Tukha chevski's proposals, not understanding and not appreciating them. Hitler's intelligence service decided to behead the Red Army on the eve of the war, to eliminate Tukhachevski and other geniuses. The Germans fabricated a false document, and paranoid, suspicious Stalin believed it, unleashing a terror that took on catastrophic dimensions. Stalin destroyed the most talented men. The total number of exterminated army commanders was 36,761, and another 3,000 men in the navy. In total, this was 40,000 great troop commanders. The defeat of the Red Army in 1941 was a direct consequence of the terror in 1937 and 1938. In 1941, because of the mass extermination of the command staff, the vast majority of Soviet commanders did not have the necessary experience, because they had not been in their positions for more than a year.

All these legends fall apart as soon as they are examined. Let us begin with the first legend about the brilliant troop leader Tukhachevski.

Mikhail Tukhachevski had no higher education. He never went to a university or to a military academy. He graduated from a military school that trained junior officers. Tukhachevski never commanded a company, battalion, regiment, brigade, division, or corps. He was a deputy to a company commander in a Guards corps. His combat experience in World War I had been six months. In the beginning of 1915, he was taken prisoner. After his release, Tukhachevski returned to a reserve battalion of his old regiment. This was during

a time of total decay in the old country and army. Commanders for the most part were not appointed, but elected by soldiers. Understandably, the soldiers did not choose those who would demand discipline and order, but those who would not stop them from doing what soldiers like to do. The soldiers quickly ousted the commanders they did not like, and elected new ones. In order to keep one's position, one had to do nothing, and close one's eyes to all the soldiers' crimes and disorderly conduct. The soldiers liked Tukhachevski and elected him to be company commander. He did not "command" for long. An army with such a command system could not last for long. It rotted and fell apart.

The Communists then began to form their armed forces, which they called the Red Army. Junior officer Tukhachevski had a meeting with Lenin and Trotsky. What they talked about is not known, but Tukhachevski was immediately appointed commander of the 1st Army of the Eastern Front. Here, suddenly, surfaced Tukhachevski's ferocious nature. The Civil War in Russia was not only a war, but also a series of punitive expeditions against those who did not want Communism. Tukhachevski declared all those who opposed the illegal Communist leadership to be "bandits," and viciously exterminated not only them but also their relatives, their neighbors, and everyone who happened to come his way. The foundation of Tukhachevski's "strategy" was: the burning of villages, whippings, and mass shootings. Tukhachevski phrased the main objective not only of the Civil War, but of any other war as well, very clearly: "With an iron hand crush the local enemy classes." Many of Tukhachevski's combat orders are not about how to use a clever maneuver to bypass the enemy and hit him in the flank and rear, but about how many hostages are to be taken and when they are to be executed. Here is an example:

ORDER

To the Plenipotentiary Commission of All-Russia
Central Executive Committee, # 16
City of Tambov
June 23, 1921

The experience of the first combat area shows a high predisposition for quick cleansing from banditry through the following measures. Some localities with particularly strong bandit tendencies are noted, and representatives of the region's Political Commission, of a Special Section, Sections of the Military Tribunal and Command, together with units designed to conduct purges, are sent there. Upon their arrival, they surround the area, take hostage 60–100 of the most prominent persons, and introduce a siege. Entering and exiting the area must be forbidden during the course of the operation. After this, the entire population of the area is gathered, and the orders of the Commission of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee #130 and #171 and the signed sentence for this area are read aloud. The residents are given 2 hours to give up the bandits and their weapons, as well as the bandits' families, and the population is told that in the event of refusal the abovementioned hostages will be shot in 2 hours. If the population does not give up the bandits and weapons within the two-hour time limit, they are once again rounded up and the hostages are shot before their eyes, after which new hostages are taken and those gathered are once

again told to give up the bandits and their weapons. Those who wish to comply with the demands are separated, divided into groups of a hundred, and each hundred is put through a questioning commission (consisting of representatives of the Special Sector and the Military Tribunal). Each person must give a testimony, and not be allowed to claim ignorance. In the event of stubbornness, new executions are enacted, etc. From the material obtained through the questioning, expeditionary units are formed with the compulsory inclusion of the persons who gave the testimony, and they venture to capture the bandits. Upon the end of the purge, the siege is ended, and a revolutionary committee and militia are established to rule the area.

The current Plenipotentiary Commission of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee orders to execute this order fully.

Chairman of the Commission
Antonov-Ovseenko

Troops Commander
Tukhachevski

Tukhachevski and all other participants of that war against their own people declared themselves heroes of the Civil War.

Pay particular attention to the date of Tukhachevski's order: June 23, 1921. Twenty years later, Russia would be invaded by different occupants, but they would act in almost the same way. The difference was that Hitler herded the enemy's population into a ravine and machine-gunned them, while Tukhachevski, on top of this, besieged the entire population of his own country with a mutual criminal responsibility. Later on this method would be called, in the criminal underworld, "forced snitching." This is precisely what Antonov-Ovseenko, Tukhachevski, his deputy Uborevich, and all other strategists did: they forced all the people to become traitors and rats, forced them to betray their neighbors, relatives, fathers, and brothers, and then go after them in the forests and kill them. Tukhachevski introduced universal betrayal, using fear to crush and destroy the centuries-old Russian village morale. He replaced all moral codes with fear for one's own skin, and made each person accountable for all the others' deeds. Tukhachevski's idea was to crush the people's sense of their own worth. When we speak of the defeats of 1941, we blame Stalin. Let us not forget that the crushing of the people was done under the immediate command and on the initiative of the very same strategists who were later, during the purges, eliminated by Stalin.

In 1941, the masses who were taught by Tukhachevski to value only their own skin *a priori* could not have exhibited heroism.

Here is the reason for the army purges of 1937: Stalin was preparing for war against Germany. He decided to beat his country, the Army included, into submission. As a by-product of the purges, Stalin got rid of the bloodiest executioners: of Antonov-Ovseenko, Tukhachevski, Yakir, Uborevich, Blukher, and others like them. Such "troop leaders" could not be placed in positions to lead the masses mobilized for war. Soldiers would not follow these commanders into battle and, given the opportunity, would remember and remind these hatchet men of the crimes they committed during the previous two decades against their parents and older brothers.

On the other hand, all these strategists would have been incapable of leading the people into war. It is well known that an army that has sullied its uniforms with the blood of its own people is incapable of fighting against outside enemies. The primary reason for the decay of any army is its use against its own people. Everyone who has actively participated in this could no longer be a troop leader.

Here is another pearl from the treasury of strategist Tukhachevski's combat experience:

TO THE TROOPS' CHIEF OF STAFF

For signature by Kakurin

By the Political Commission of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th districts

July 8, 1921

Defeated bandits are hiding in the forests and taking out their impotent rage on the local population, burning bridges [and] damaging dams and other government property. In the interest of securing the bridges, the Commission of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee orders:

Immediately take from the population of villages located near important bridges no less than five hostages, who in the event of damage done to the bridge are to be immediately executed.

Under supervision of the Revolutionary Committees, the local residents are to organize the defense of the bridges from bandit attacks; the local residents are also to take on the responsibility of repairing the damaged bridges no later than within a 24-hour deadline.

This order is to be widely distributed among all villages and towns.

Troop commander
Tukhachevski

The great strategist has strange logic: the bandits "are hiding in the forests and taking out their impotent rage on the local population," so Tukhachevski orders execution of hostages taken out of this very same local population.

All of Tukhachevski's experience can be narrowed down to two things: hostages and executions. Meanwhile, the taking of hostages was forbidden by the Hague Convention of 1907. Hostage taking has always been considered the most serious war crime. A troop leader who sullied his name with this sort of maneuver has always been despised. At Nuremberg and all subsequent trials of German Nazis the practice of taking hostages was regarded as a war crime and those guilty of it were sentenced to death by hanging.

So that would have been a proper place for Tukhachevski, Antonov-Ovseenko, and all other war criminals—on the defendants' bench at Nuremberg, in the company of Hermann Goering, Wilhelm Keitel, Alfred Jodl, and others.

Tukhachevski encountered real enemy troops only once. The Western front of the Red Army under Tukhachevski's command headed to the West with the intention of breaking through to Germany and unleashing a Communist revolution. But Tukhachevski did not reach Germany. His hordes were defeated near Warsaw by the Polish army commanded by Pilsudsky.

The defeat was shameful and total. Tukhachevski became enraged. We have been taught

that in 1920 Tukhachevski was defeated by the Polish cavalry, but if he had lived until 1941 and met the German tank armadas he undoubtedly would have defeated them. Lenin and Trotsky did not think so. They understood that Tukhachevski was only good for war against his own people. Therefore, he was once again sent to the inside front—to drown under ice the sailors who started the uprising at Kronstadt, to shoot hostages in Tambov county, and to burn villages. Here, Tukhachevski showed a true strategic talent.

Tukhachevski strove to get power in the stupidest way. He made a bigger fool of himself than anyone in the Civil War, and yet he declared himself a winner. He decided to personally edit the three-volume book *Civil War, 1918–1921*, portraying himself as a great strategist and blaming others for his defeats. Here it must be stressed that Tukhachevski strove specifically to edit history, not write it. Everyone who has read Tukhachevski's book, *March beyond Vistula* (*Pokhod za Vislu*), would agree that Tukhachevski was incapable of relating his thoughts. Marshal Joseph Pilsudsky crushed Tukhachevski, first on the battlefields and later in the pages of his book *The Year 1920*. Pilsudsky exposed both Tukhachevski's incapability to fight and his incapability to relate past events. Pilsudsky did not leave any part of Tukhachevski's book standing: "The extreme vagueness of the book gives us the image of a man who analyzes only his own brain or his heart, purposefully rejecting or simply not knowing how to tie his own thoughts with the everyday existence of troops, which not always corresponds to the plans and intentions of their commander, but often contradicts them. . . . Many events in the operations of 1920 occurred as they did precisely because [of] Tukhachevski's propensity to command the army with such an abstract method."

Legend number two: Tukhachevski proposed to Stalin a plan for modernizing the army. This legend is also easy to disperse. For this, one only needs to read Tukhachevski's "scientific works." Only someone who himself has not read Tukhachevski's creations can praise his work. Aside from using purposefully incomprehensible terms and long phrases, the meaning of which can be interpreted in any way one wants, Tukhachevski had one more weakness—he did not understand the significance of numbers. He always wanted to astound the reader and listener with unbelievable numbers.

"Multi-million [strong] armies deployed on the fronts stretching hundreds of thousands of kilometers."¹ This is how Tukhachevski describes World War I. Fronts stretching hundreds of thousands of kilometers? Is this not nonsense? France, Britain, their vassals from the colonies, and later the United States fought against Germany. The Western front stretched from the shores of the North Sea to the Swiss border. In a straight line, this does not even make five hundred kilometers. A front is obviously not drawn in a straight line. But even with all possible bends and turns, one cannot scrounge up enough for a thousand kilometers. And all the millions of French, British, Australian, New Zealander, Canadian, and then American troops in World War I were positioned along these kilometers. If the front had stretched hundreds of thousands of kilometers, how many millions of soldiers would be needed to cover it?

The Eastern front in World War I stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. This is less than two thousand kilometers. The front was not a straight line, so let us assume three thousand kilometers. Where did fronts stretching hundreds of thousands of kilometers come from? If the northern hemisphere had fought against the southern, and the trenches were dug along the bottom of the seas and oceans, even then we would still only get forty thousand kilometers. Did Tukhachevski know the length of the equator? Where, on this small planet, could one find fronts hundreds of thousands of kilometers in length?

Yet for decades this was published not only in the *Selected Works* of Tukhachevski, but in compilations that demonstrate the best accomplishments of strategic thought.

In 1927, Chief of Staff of the Red Army Tukhachevski wrote a letter to Stalin and proposed a military reform. Marshal of the Soviet Union S. S. Biruzov in his praising essay, as if by the way, notes that: “The addressing of these questions by M. N. Tukhachevski was correct and timely, but as to concrete data, they needed to be made more specific.”²

Instead of fulfilling his direct duties Tukhachevski, the genius strategist, plunged into the development of some pipe-dream project. And everything he did was correct, timely, and extremely necessary. Only his numbers needed to be more exact. Does one need to pay attention to such minor details?

I think, yes. The General Staff is the brain of the army. A country cannot have a man more cautious than the Chief of General Staff. His accuracy first and foremost needs to be applied to his work with numbers. Thousands of the most highly qualified officers are under the command of the Chief of General Staff. The General Staff exists to think everything through, count and calculate everything, and then, having weighed all the information and taken into account the thousands of contradictory circumstances, report to the head of the country.

What numbers are we talking about? What exactly did Tukhachevski propose to Stalin? For decades, scholars have praised Tukhachevski the innovator, who proposed something very interesting, but for some reason nobody says what exactly it was that he proposed. We shall think about this: could a person who did not understand the significance of numbers have proposed anything of value?

Lieutenant General of the Air Force V. V. Serebrianikov described what sort of reform Tukhachevski proposed to Stalin. It turns out that in December 1927 Tukhachevski, on top of everything else, suggested to Stalin to produce during the course of 1928 alone 50,000 to 100,000 tanks.³

Let us compare and evaluate this number.

In 1928, Hitler was not in power in Germany. Nobody could even imagine that he would ever come to power. Germany at that time did not have one single tank. The entire German army consisted of 100,000 soldiers, officers, and generals—all of them infantry and cavalry. Tukhachevski proposed to have one Soviet tank for every German general, officer, and infantry soldier in the ranks, as well as for every German messenger and cook in the field kitchen.

On September 1, 1939, Hitler entered World War II with 2,980 tanks, among which there were no amphibious tanks and no medium or heavy tanks. We are told that it is clear: if Hitler had such a huge number of tanks, it must have meant they were not for defense, they were not for Europe alone. If Hitler had built such a number of tanks, it obviously meant that he planned to conquer the world.

I fully agree with this. But in that case, what did Tukhachevski plan to do with armadas of 50,000 to 100,000 tanks?

The 2,980 German tanks were built not during one year, but during all the prewar years. Tukhachevski, on the other hand, proposed to build 50,000 to 100,000 tanks in just one year.

It is interesting to compare Tukhachevski's plans for 1928 with real production of tanks (not including self-propelled guns—see below) in Germany during the course of World War II:

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>TANKS</u>
1939	743
1940	1,515
1941	3,113
1942	4,276
1943	5,663
1944	7,975
1945	956

In total, during the prewar months of 1939 and all the subsequent years of the war, Germany produced 24,241 tanks. Japan built 5,085 tanks, most of them light.

We have been taught a formulaic phrase: “the German fascists and Japanese militarists.” Indeed, if they produced such a large number of tanks, 24,241 and 5,085 respectively, it is clear to everybody that this is fascism and militarism. But the question arises: Who was Tukhachevski, in the context of these fascists and militarists striving for world domination?

After the war the Soviet Union, already a much more powerful industrial giant, had 50,000 tanks, or even slightly more. But these tanks were not produced in one year; they had accumulated for decades.

But even this careful gradual accumulation of tanks did not save the Soviet Union. The great industrial giant crumbled. Its legs folded under its weight. Those very same thousands of tanks played far from a minor role in the crumbling of the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, the brilliant Tukhachevski proposed that Stalin not gradually, for decades, amass such a might, but that he produce all at once, in one year, 50,000 to 100,000 tanks. The result of such an action is easy to predict: the legs of the Soviet Union would have folded immediately.

The USSR had no tank factories at that time. Even if they had existed, it would still first of all have been necessary to stop production of all heavy machinery—automobiles, ships, locomotives, railroad cars, tractors, and all others—and to remodel these factories to produce tanks.

If one had accepted Tukhachevski’s proposal, it would have been necessary to stop all the industry of a gigantic country for a minimum of one year and fully remodel it for producing tanks.

By the standards of any army, two hundred to three hundred tanks are a tank division. In the 1970s, during the peak of the Cold War, the American army, the army of the most powerful nation in the world, had sixteen divisions, among them four tank divisions.

Hitler went after world domination in September 1939 with just six tank divisions. In 1927 neither Germany, nor the United States, nor France, nor Japan had any tank divisions. If Stalin had listened to Tukhachevski and produced 50,000 to 100,000 tanks, the Soviet Union within one year would have had 166 to 500 tank divisions.

At that time the crew of one tank consisted of three men. Crews for 50,000 to 100,000 tanks would have meant that the tank troops would need to number 150,000 to 300,000 soldiers, correct? No, incorrect.

Tank crews make up an insignificant minority of men in a tank division. First of all, tanks must constantly and at the right time be supplied with liquid fuel and lubricants. Tanks also need shells and cartridges. This adds another column of automobiles with ammunition.

Furthermore, tanks need repair, and not only in stationary repair shops but in the field. For this one needs to have mobile tank-repair shops and even mobile tank-repair factories. This again means more men and automobiles.

But in order to repair a tank it must be towed under enemy fire out of the ditch, swamp, or battlefield and taken to the mobile repair shop. For this one needs specialized repair-evacuation units.

In order to repair a tank in field conditions, the necessary spare parts must constantly be supplied to the battle area. So, our column of tanks is followed by a long tail without which the tank units cannot act.

Tanks need to be defended and protected in close battle; the success of tanks needs to be retained. This is done by the motorized infantry. Every tank division needs its own regiment of motorized infantry, and every corps needs its own motorized infantry division. Tank action needs to be supported by artillery fire. For this we have guns and mortars. The action of tanks, infantry, and artillery needs to be protected. For this we have anti-tank cannons. All this needs to be organized and coordinated. Troop command needs to have a flow of information through thousands of different channels. This is provided by communication units. All this means more automobiles and more men.

The Soviet standard for the year 1940 was as follows: for the bare necessities of supplying the operation of 1,000 tanks (one mechanized corps—1,031 tanks), 36,080 soldiers and officers, 358 guns and mortars, 266 armored cars, 352 tractors, and 5,165 automobiles were needed. This is not counting reinforcements, air force, and the rear formation that had to supply this entire mass of troops.

We thought that one tank just needed three men, but in reality it needed thirty-six men. The war later showed that the prewar calculations were too low. In order to maintain the action of each tank on the battlefield one needed seventy to eighty men per tank, twice as many automobiles as supposed before the war, and thrice as much artillery.

But even using the lowered prewar calculations, to fulfill Tukhachevski's program the tank troops would have needed to have 1.8 million to 3.6 million soldiers and officers, 18,000 to 36,000 tractors, as many guns and mortars, 13,000 to 26,000 armored cars, and 250,000 to 500,000 trucks.

The German armed forces at that time counted 100,000 soldiers, officers, and generals. Meanwhile, Tukhachevski envisioned the Red Army having half a million men just to drive the automobiles in the tank divisions. Not counting the drivers of tanks, artillery pulls, and armored cars, plus commanders, communications officers, sappers, intelligence, and all the rest.

Perhaps Tukhachevski thought the tank troops could do without automobiles?

The Soviet Union at that time could not have devoted half a million automobiles to the tank troops. It could not have given a quarter million either. It could not have devoted so many automobiles not just to the tank troops, but to the entire armed force. And if it had, then agriculture, the transportation system, construction, and industry would have been left without automobiles and tractors. If all automobiles were given to the tank troops, then how much fuel, oil, and spare parts would those cars have used up?

And how would such tank troops have been manned? There was no mandatory universal draft in the Soviet Union at that time. Should one have been instituted? This was already beyond the duties of the Chief of Staff of the Red Army.

Let us assume that Tukhachevski decided to keep 1.8 to 3.6 million soldiers in the tank troops alone. Where would they have been trained? Practically everyone who finds himself in tank forces needs special preparations. These soldiers would have needed to learn how to be radio operators, repairmen, gunners, scouts, and commanders. Would everyone have had to go through training divisions? How many training divisions would have been needed?

And what would have been done about officers? Tukhachevski's proposal was to produce the tanks immediately. Even if they had been produced, how many officers would have been needed to staff at least one hundred new tank divisions? The USSR could have opened new military academies. During peacetime, an officer was trained for three years. Tanks would have been arriving from the plants, as Tukhachevski planned, in 1928, but the officers would not have graduated until 1931, and they all would have been young and inexperienced, while what was needed at the time was commanders for battalions, regiments, divisions, and corps.

Where would the officers have lived? Even now Russia is incapable of building housing for all her officers. Back then, where would the officers have lived—in tents? Where would they have found enough tents?

Where were the tanks to be stored? During wartime it is easy: tanks loaded on railway trains travel from the factories directly to the front and go into action, and the life of a tank in the war is short: very soon it has to go into repair or is melted down, and new tanks take its place. Tanks do not need to be stored. They do not accumulate: while tanks are unloaded from one train, the tanks from the previous one are already burning in battle.

But here is the situation: in peacetime, a stream of steel monsters suddenly flows in from the production plants. What are we to do with them? Keep them in the open fields, in the cold and the snow?

In addition, the armed forces of that time could not consist of just tank corps and tank armies. For every tank and motorized division there needed to be a minimum of three to four rifle divisions. Consequently, there would have to be from 847 to 3,000 rifle divisions. At that time, Germany had twelve divisions, in total.

Some think that the army's strength is in its numbers. Tukhachevski was from that breed of strategists who wanted to fight with numbers. But, as we can see, even with numbers he had some difficulties. He never understood the meaning of numbers. He never learned to work with them.

Tukhachevski was incapable of working out the simplest calculation of the consequences of his actions and proposals. We have to marvel at Stalin's patience—how could such a strategist have been kept in high government positions?

If 50,000 to 100,000 tanks are produced in one year, one should simultaneously produce about as many airplanes, because without air force support the tanks become coffins. Fifty to one hundred thousand airplanes? In one year? Where would they have been built? At what factories? Or, perhaps we would not have produced the planes right away, just put out all the tanks and left them without air support? This would have been a crime; it would have been treason. For such actions one should be executed.

So, what kind of army did Tukhachevski want to form? Or did he plan to just have tanks without airplanes or artillery?

Tukhachevski demanded: we need to produce tanks! Here, many questions arise, and quite an important one among them is: What kinds of tanks?

For mass production, one needs not just an industrial base, but also a model of the machine that is to be produced. In 1928, there was no industrial base, and there was also no fitting tank model for production. In 1927, the Red Army enlisted into its armament the MS-1 tank. The power of its engine speaks for everything else: 35 horsepower. The armor of the MS-1 tank was held together with rivets. Its maximum speed was 16 km/h. On Red Square, for the parade, it went up to 19 km/h. This was our best tank. A small (by our standards) series of these tanks was needed for designers to get their first experience in the creation of a tank, and for troops to get the opportunity to use real tanks in training, although they were extremely weak and flawed. This tank was also useful to the troops for small border disputes. When there is nothing better . . . But to make them by the tens of thousands? Who needs them? Perhaps we could have bought a foreign model? There was nothing to buy. In 1928, nobody in the entire world could have offered a model worthy of being mass-produced in a large series.

Arms production demands colossal expenditures. Therefore, intelligent people design weapons, produce them in small series, and have production and mobilization reserves of everything necessary to supply the mass production of the latest models in a period of threat.

In places where not very intelligent leaders rule, the peacetime army is enormous. The country strains itself trying to clothe, feed, and arm such an army. This army demands a huge amount of weapons during peacetime—but weapons age. The time comes when they have to be replaced, and this is a true disaster for the country. Technology development is rapid, and the gigantic arsenals have to constantly be renewed, which turns into a perpetual catastrophe. The result is that we defeat ourselves.

Why did Tukhachevski need so many weapons in 1927? Hundreds of times more than all potential aggressors put together. Who threatened us then? Who could attack us in 1928? Romania? Finland? Estonia in alliance with Latvia, and egged on by Lithuania? Disarmed Germany? Perhaps Japan? But Japan is an island nation, and to fight her, in order to avert the landing and supplying of Japanese troops on the continent, we would have needed to build a strong fleet in the Far East. But Tukhachevski was opposed to the idea of building a strong fleet and spoke against it publicly.

And so, what were the 100,000 tanks for?

Tukhachevski's defenders say that everything in his proposals is correct, only the numbers had to be clarified. But if numbers are clarified nothing remains of Tukhachevski's proposals at all. Aside from insane numbers, they contained nothing.

Meanwhile, Tukhachevski advanced more and more new projects.

"The USSR's industry had to reach by the year 1938 a production capacity that would be capable during the course of one year to put out 53,000 guns, 90,000 tanks, and 60,000 airplanes. The views about the production possibilities were formed under the influence of M. Tukhachevski."⁴ This is quoted in a Soviet military textbook!

Inevitably, the question to be asked here is: what is the difference between Stalin and Tukhachevski? Stalin also planned to produce 100,000 to 150,000 airplanes, of the model Ivanov!

There is a difference, and it is tremendous. Tukhachevski planned an incredibly huge military production during peacetime. This would have bankrupted the country. There was nothing to do with and nowhere to store the produced arsenal. If war had not happened in the near future, the mountains of arms would have quickly aged and rusted.

Stalin, on the other hand, proposed an entirely different plan: to create during peacetime an airplane for mass production, but to produce it in a small series. The beginning of the mass production was to happen only after the beginning of a victorious war.

A legend is told around the world that German intelligence supplied Stalin with a false document proving that Tukhachevski was forming a plot. Stalin believed the false document and destroyed the great strategist Tukhachevski.

If this is the truth, the Red Army should be thankful to German intelligence for an invaluable service.

15

The Cleansing

Only one who first conquers his own people can overcome a powerful enemy.

—SHANG YANG, FIFTH CENTURY BC

Power struggles never died down in the Communist Party. Party purges followed one after the other. Stalin drove all his opponents out of the party, and then they were arrested, tried, sent to prisons and labor camps, and executed according to court sentences without an appeal. Stalin put those he personally chose and cultivated into the opened positions. An equally continuous process of replacing the personnel in the secret police, and in the fields of science, art, literature, industry, trade, and agriculture went on at the same time as the permanent purges of the party. Arrests and trials of engineers, historians, and members of defunct political parties and organizations were constant. Any dictator acts in this way, and without any hints from outside sources. In order to lead the country to conquering other nations, any dictator begins with terror against his own surroundings. In order to raise many men and lead them to conquer the world, in order to reach “the last sea,” Genghis Khan before all had to conquer the most powerful and rich princes. Those who did not want to follow him had their spines broken on his orders.

This is exactly what Stalin did. In order to raise the nation to accomplish great deeds, he first of all had to obtain unquestioning obedience.

But in all the purges, for many years the army was the exception. The purges left the army alone. Stalin for a long time made sure to see that at the very top he had his own man. The army was only purged by Tukhachevski himself, who chased out all those he did not like personally. But Stalin had to reach the army sometime! Didn't he? Could he have possibly, without receiving the German false document, left the army untouched?

The purges were a struggle for fortification of power, for its preservation. This is a struggle for the leader's personal safety. The purges were a means to avert an uprising. Uprisings are always and everywhere started first and foremost by the military.

In his books, Tukhachevski shamelessly praised and lauded himself. For example, he transformed his disgraceful defeat near Warsaw into a brilliant victory. Everyone who has

read Tukhachevski's books clearly saw that they were written by a very strange man completely infatuated with himself, a man with impossible ambitions. Such a man is extremely dangerous in a position at the top of the military command.

Stalin for many years conducted preparations for eliminating high-ranking military leaders whom he deemed untrustworthy. Tukhachevski was one of them: the most famous, but certainly not the only one. Following are the most prominent examples.

On the night of July 2, 1935, Corps Commander G. Gay was arrested. The 3rd Cavalry Corps under his command had been the main assault and maneuvering force in the battle near Warsaw fought by Tukhachevski in 1920. In 1935 Gay was the head of the military history department at the Zhukovsky Air Force Academy. In those times the Soviet Union did not have military history other than the Civil War. All that had preceded the Civil War was treated as a foreword and reviewed very superficially and briefly. The history of the Civil War, on the other hand, was learned meticulously. The reason Gay was arrested was that he was not teaching military history "correctly," and the required reading for his students was the history of the Civil War prepared by Tukhachevski.

On April 17, 1936, N. I. Muralov, who had become commander of the Moscow military district back in 1917, was arrested. It was under Muralov's cover that the Lenin-Trotsky government fled from Petrograd to Moscow in 1918. In 1936 Stalin began to put pressure on all those who had been chosen by Lenin and Trotsky and placed in high positions.

On June 9, 1936, division commander D. Shmidt, a friend of Tukhachevski, was arrested. On August 14, 1936, Corps Commander Primakov was arrested. Primakov was connected with Tukhachevski for many years: he had been under Tukhachevski's command back in 1920, in the campaign to occupy Poland. Later Primakov was tried and executed at the same time as Tukhachevski.

On August 15, 1936, Brigade Commander M. O. Zyuk, commander of the 25th Chapaev Division, was arrested.

On August 20, 1936, another future codefendant was arrested—Corps Commander Putna. Two of the eight defendants from Tukhachevski's group were already in prison. The process had begun.

Corps Commander S. A. Turovsky was arrested on September 2, 1936. Division Commander Y. V. Sablin was arrested on September 25. The Byelorussian military district commander, I. P. Uborevich, a friend and follower of Tukhachevski, was arrested on May 29, 1937. Later they were executed together. So, in January 1937 the composition of the group of high commanders who were to fall under suspicion was already becoming clear: as a group, they vocally opposed K. E. Voroshilov, Stalin's perennial favorite, who then was Minister of Defense.

On January 24, 1937, at an open court trial, former member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party Karl Radek, who had been accused of espionage, treason, and preparation of a coup, named Tukhachevski as a collaborator. Anyone who knows anything about Stalin's open trials, and who has thought about the meaning and significance of these trials, will agree that names were never mentioned there by accident. According to Radek, Tukhachevski had sent Corps Commander Putna to Berlin, where he conducted talks with Trotskyites. Tukhachevski personally was not yet being accused of anything; he only sent Putna to Berlin on business, and Putna used the opportunity.

From this moment, Tukhachevski could have blown his brains out—his fate had not only been decided, but publicly declared. Walther Schellenberg, a Nazi foreign intelligence agent, relates that in May 1937 German Intelligence had succeeded in passing to Stalin a forged document which presented Tukhachevski as a head of the Red Army generals' plot to overthrow the Soviet government.¹ As the story goes, Stalin was duped by this forgery and started the purges in the Red Army. The Germans thus had crippled the Red Army with Stalin's hands.

But a simple check of chronology shows that Schellenberg's story is not correct: the above-mentioned purges started in the summer of 1935, long before the forged document was allegedly created by German Intelligence.

There are many tales about 1937. They are surprisingly absurd and just as surprisingly resilient. But it suffices to ask just one question for the picture that has been painted for decades to immediately fall apart.

Here is one more myth: in 1937–38, Stalin executed forty thousand commanders, therefore in 1941 most commanders had not been at their post for more than one year.

But this could not be!

Let us imagine that in 1937 Stalin executed all commanders—every single one, from platoon commanders to marshals. He herded them all into abandoned cellars and machine-gunned them down, and then appointed new commanders to their posts. Let's imagine this complete change of the command staff. Here is what would have happened: by the summer of 1941, all the newly appointed commanders would have had four years of experience. How could it be that the purge occurred in 1937, but by 1941 the majority of commanders had less than a year's experience in their positions? There are objections that the executions happened not only in 1937, but in 1938 as well. Good, we can allow that the commanders appointed in 1937 were in the following year machine-gunned in the cellars. Another, third group of command personnel was appointed. In this case, the third group appointed in 1938 should have had three years of experience by 1941. If a full change of command occurred, the majority of these commanders could not have gone anywhere. Understandably during three years someone drowned, someone became a drunk. One, two, three hundred were executed in 1939, 1940, and the first half of 1941. There could have been some shuffling and reshuffling. But the majority should have stayed in their places. How did it happen that the purges occurred in 1937–38, but in three to four years the new commanders did not have even a full year of experience at their posts?

The answer to the mysterious lack of experience on the job is simple: in the years 1937–41 the Red Army grew five-fold, from 1.1 million to 5.5 million. The commanding positions had to be filled, so the officers were promoted quickly and did not have time to "grow" into their jobs. Similarly quick promotions occurred then in the German army as well, but nobody claims that German commanders were incompetent.

This problem can be examined from another perspective. Stalin's army was large. Forty thousand commanders are not that many. The officer corps of the Red Army in February 1937 is known to have numbered 206,000. The source of this number is the top-secret speech given at the February–March plenary session of the Central Committee by Politburo member and People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, Marshal of the Soviet Union K. E. Voroshilov.²

Let's allow that 40,000 out of 206,000 were executed. This is less than 20 percent. The question is the same, only seen from a different perspective: how did it happen that less than 20 percent were executed, but in 1941 the majority of commanders did not have a year of experience at their occupied post?

We see that the legends about the year 1937 are quite vulnerable. It is enough to ask the simplest questions—and not one Communist historian will be able to give a reasonable answer.

July 29, 1938, was the peak of the terror. After this, the intensity dropped drastically. On September 19, 1938, the chief of the 6th (Manpower) Department of the command staff of the Red Army, Colonel Shiryaev, presented to the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense E. A. Shchyadenko a document that specified the number of commanders dismissed from the ranks of the Red Army during the period starting in 1937 through September 1938. The document is kept in the Russian State Military Archive, fund 37837, index 10, case 142, sheet 93. Here it is—a primary source. The numbers are as follows: in 1937, 20,643 men were dismissed; in 1938, 16,118, for a total of 36,761.

Let's turn our attention to one small detail: in the document, the numbers refer not to "executed" but to "dismissed" men.

For fifty-four years, this document was secret, and only a very limited number of extremely dishonest men had access to it. These men committed a crime against history. They reported the number—36,761. From this everyone made a seemingly logical deduction: if the person was fired, he was arrested, and if he was arrested, he was executed.

But this was not the case. Dismissed did not always mean arrested. And arrested did not always mean executed.

The document gives additional information: out of the number of people dismissed in 1937, 5,811 were arrested, and 5,057 in 1938. In total, 10,868 people were arrested.

We were told of 40,000 *executed*, but in reality there were 10,868 *arrested*, and of them 1,654 were executed or died in prison before their trials started.³

There is a difference between arrest and execution. Some of those arrested were executed, but not all of them. I will use an example to explain the difference. In 1937, Commander of the 5th Cavalry Corps Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskii was dismissed from the ranks of the Red Army. He was not just dismissed, but also arrested. But this is not yet an execution. He was imprisoned, and then let out. He fought through the entire war. He finished the war with the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union and commanded the victory parade at the Red Square. He was not alone among the 10,868 arrested commanders; many of them were set free.

This is an example of Kremlin propaganda. If the document had been published fully at the time, stating that so many people were dismissed, so many out of them arrested, but not all of them executed, this mess would never have arisen. But the people who had access to the documents purposefully published only fragments of information. The explanations were omitted, which created the necessary conditions for rumors and legends.

Later on, when thousands of historians and agitators wrote into their works the information about forty thousand executed troop commanders, when hundreds of millions of people remembered this number, the document was fully published, but by then it could not change anything. Who would pay attention to a small article in a journal for specialists?

But what happened to the rest, who were dismissed but not arrested? Where did they go?

There is no secret here. In every army there is a continuous process of change, replacing the old with the new, rejuvenating the command staff. Every year military academies turn out thousands of new officers. The army never has too many officers. Every year it takes into its ranks new ones, and sends the same number of old ones back into civilian life. The main reason for dismissal is the completion of service. I will not intrude here with my own calculations, but imagine that your army has two hundred thousand officers. Estimate how many years an officer serves, decide how many commanders you must let go every year to their well-earned retirement, and then replace them with the new graduates from the academies, so that you have a constant process of renewing the ranks and so that you do not have stagnation.

The document presented to the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense is titled accordingly: "Document about the number of dismissals from the command staff in 1937–1938." Who would dare suppose that during these years nobody was dismissed from the army upon completing years of service?

It must also be remembered that not every officer reached his retirement age. A second reason for dismissal was state of health. Those who went through two, or even three wars, had all sorts of experiences. One had frostbitten legs, another had damaged hearing, and another one had old wounds that would not heal. People can be dismissed from the army not only for war wounds, but also for a number of other illnesses, from flat feet to cancer.

Aside from all this, there is such a punishment as dismissal from the army. It is no longer the year 1937, but officers are still being dismissed from the army for all kinds of reasons. The main ones are drunkenness, moral degradation, breach of discipline, and disobedience to authority. Who could dare assert that in 1937 nobody was dismissed from the army for drunkenness? This does not at all entail that the drunk was arrested and executed.

Even of those who were arrested, not all were victims of political repressions. There have always been military crimes and property crimes and so on. Among officers there have always been rapists, murderers, thieves, and other criminals. The document speaks of all those arrested without distinguishing between the political and the criminals. Who could dare assert that in 1937 there were no criminals among the command staff of the Red Army?

On May 5, 1940, E. A. Shchyadenko signed the "Report of the chief of the command of the staff personnel of the Red Army of the Defense Commissariat of the USSR." The concluding phrase: "Those unjustly dismissed are returned to the army: in total by May 1, 1940—12,461." It is important to note that the number of those returned to the ranks is higher than the number of those arrested. And this is easy to explain: both those who were arrested and those who were simply dismissed were returned to the ranks. The Kremlin propaganda endlessly repeats the story about the 40,000 executed commanders, but for some reason nobody likes to remember that 12,461 of those "executed" returned to the ranks. And this is only the beginning of the process. It is known that the main mass of those dismissed returned in the second half of 1940, and especially in the first half of 1941—for example, A. V. Gorbатов, a future General of the Red Army. Many such examples can be brought up. A strange story surfaces: Shchyadenko, who wrote the document about the dismissed commanders, is often quoted. But the same Shchyadenko who reports of the return of those who were dismissed is never remembered or quoted.

We have been taught to think that Stalin executed all the intelligent people and left only idiots in command of the army. But here is the opinion of German Major General F. W. von Mellentin, who fought against the Red Army: "The Russian high command knows its job better than the command of any other army."⁴ So it seems that Stalin did not execute all the geniuses before the war; some of them were left.

The enemy's opinion cannot always be trusted, so let us see what the Russian historians say about the effect that the purges of 1937–38 had on the Red Army. G. Gerasimov had studied the hard data and compared the characteristics of the commanders on the eve of German invasion in 1941 and in 1936, before the purges started:

In 1941, 7.1 percent of all commanders had higher education, while in 1936 that figure was only 6.6 percent;

In 1941, 52 percent of the generals had higher education, in 1936 only 29 percent;

In 1941, 29.5 percent of all commanders had combat experience, while in 1934–38 that figure was 23 percent.⁵

Gerasimov had also found that many of the purged commanders were heroes of the Civil War. Treated as such, they were quickly promoted to the political leadership and, though retaining their high ranks, they in fact left active military service. On the other hand, their less illustrious comrades had to plod through the ranks and thus acquired the experience that the political leaders clearly lacked.

With all that said, Gerasimov hints that the purges might have brought fear and uncertainty among the commanders of the Red Army. But he admits that this criterion can hardly be measured, and his final conclusion is that the purges did not weaken the Red Army.

A surprising fact: Stalin's marshals—Rokossovskii, Malinovsky, Govorov, Meretskov, and Vassilevsky—during the course of the war performed true miracles. Goebbels wrote the following about them in his diary on March 15, 1945: "Stalin has all the reasons to honor the Soviet marshals like movie stars, they showed remarkable military talents."⁶ But in the summer of 1941 all these men, to put it subtly, did not show remarkable talents. So what happened? They were idiots in the beginning of the war, and then got smarter by the end? That does not happen. A man acquires experience in the war, but an idiot always stays an idiot. The idiots of 1941 could not have turned into outstanding troop leaders.

Only one conclusion follows from all this: Stalin's commanders were not idiots in 1941. The reasons for the defeat of the Red Army in 1941 should be searched for, but not in the stupidity of Stalin's generals.

16

Spain

All the peoples who fall under the “protection” of victorious Germany will also become our allies. We will have a broad field of action for development of the world revolution.

—JOSEPH STALIN, SPEECH AT A MEETING OF THE POLITBURO OF
THE PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE, AUGUST 19, 1939

On July 18, 1936, the radio station of the city of Ceuta (then in Spanish Morocco) transmitted several times the code phrase: “The skies above all of Spain are clear.” This was the signal to begin the militant uprising against the Spanish Republic. General José Sanjurjo was at the head of the uprising, and after his death the position was taken over by General Francisco Franco. At the beginning, the troops located in the colonies provided support to the uprising. The militants had to transport these troops quickly from North Africa to Spain. Hitler came to General Franco’s aid. He allocated twenty Ju-52 military-transport airplanes, which for almost three months made continuous trips from Morocco to Spain and back.¹ “Between July 28, 1936, and the end of August of the same year, the three-engine Junker Ju-52 aircraft transferred a total of 7,350 soldiers and officers, as well as some artillery units and machine guns, from Africa to Spain. The planes made 461 flights, often with over-limit cargo. An additional 5,455 troops were transferred during 324 such flights in September; then 1,157 more troops during 83 flights in October. Later on, Hitler noted that “Franco needs to erect a monument, honoring the Ju-52 as the aircraft, responsible for his victory in Spain.”² This was the first mass transport of troops by air in history. This air bridge saved the uprising in its most critical early stage. After this, military units of the Spanish army began coming to Franco’s side. “Eighty percent of the armed forces—120,000 soldiers and officers and a significant part of the civilian guard—found themselves on the side of the uprising.”³ General Franco was aided by the dictators of Germany, Italy, and Portugal—Hitler, Mussolini, and Salazar. Fifty thousand German, 150,000 Italian, 20,000 Portuguese, and 90,000 Moroccan soldiers and officers fought on General Franco’s side. Foreign aid to General Franco amounted to 2,700 guns, 1,150 tanks and armored cars, and 1,650 airplanes.⁴

The People's Army was formed out of the parts of the Spanish army that remained loyal to the Republic. Volunteers from around the world came to the defense of the Spanish republic and formed seven international brigades. According to the figures of one of the brigade leaders, K. Sverchevsky, the total number of international volunteer troops was no less than 42,000.⁵ Volunteers from fifty-four nations of the world were enlisted in the Republican army.⁶

The Soviet Union could not remain on the sidelines. V. A. Antonov-Ovseenko arrived in Spain. In 1917 he had been one of the key figures during the Communist takeover in Russia. He had been among the leaders who stormed the Winter Palace, and had personally arrested the provisional government. Having taken down the legal government, Antonov-Ovseenko entered the illegal government that was not recognized by Russia's allies, but was recognized by her enemies with whom Russia was in a state of war. In 1936 Stalin appointed Antonov-Ovseenko general consul of the Soviet Union in Barcelona. He began with recommending to the Spanish Republic's government to hide the gold reserves of the country. Where should they hide it? In Moscow. The Spanish gold reserves were brought out of the country, and never again returned. They say that the anarchists were thieves. That was true. But the gigantic reserves of Spanish gold were taken away not by anarchists, but by the unselfish Communists. The Spanish gold reserves were payment for the supply of weapons. The supply was indeed a large one, but it should openly be declared that the Soviet Union did not support the government of the Spanish Republic out of honorable feelings, but for gold, which Antonov-Ovseenko brought out of the country.⁷

Stalin appointed Jan Karlovich Berzin, commander of the 4th Directorate of the General Staff of the Red Army, to the position of chief military advisor to the Spanish Republican army. Overall, 2,065 commanders of various ranks were sent from the Red Army to Spain: 772 pilots, 351 tankers, 100 artilleryists, 222 general military advisors, and 204 interpreters.⁸ Additionally, through the NKVD line, the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, and other administrations, several hundred more Soviet diplomats, intelligence and counterintelligence officers, saboteurs, journalists, agitators, party workers, and military industry specialists were sent to Spain. The total number of volunteers, including civilian specialists, was around three thousand.⁹

Stalin sent to Spain 648 warplanes, 347 tanks, 60 armored cars, 1,186 artillery weapons, 20,486 machine guns, and 497,813 rifles.¹⁰ Aside from this, Spain received from the Soviet Union shells, cartridges, bombs, military equipment, food supplies, fuel, lubricants, and medications.¹¹ These deliveries of arms could have been much larger, but Spain was blockaded. Soviet merchant ships sailed out of Black Sea ports. In the Mediterranean Sea, the Soviet Union had neither a military fleet nor military naval bases. Defenseless merchant ships crossed the entire Mediterranean Sea to reach Spanish shores. From the Black Sea straits to the destination ports, these ships were followed by Italian and German airplanes and warships. And at the end of their destination, near the Spanish coast, they were awaited by General Franco's warships, airplanes, and submarines. Nonetheless, despite the blockade, Stalin managed to transfer to Spain a huge, by any standards, amount of strategic cargo.

In order to understand the seriousness of Stalin's intent, let us assess several of the commanders he sent to Spain. They were then lieutenants, captains, and colonels. However, they were the most promising commanders of the Red Army, and Stalin had noted them for

promotion. Spain was their last test. The majority of them quickly rose in rank after their return from Spain. Here are the heights reached by some of these military advisors in just a few years: R. Y. Malinovsky became a marshal and minister of defense of the USSR; K. A. Meretskov became a marshal and chief of the General Staff; G. I. Kulik became a marshal and the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR; N. G. Kuznetsov became admiral of the Soviet fleet, minister of the navy, and for the duration of the entire war he was a member of the Supreme High Command.¹²

And in addition to over twenty future Marshals, Generals of the Army, and Colonel Generals, over forty of those who fought in Spain later became lieutenant generals, vice admirals, major generals, and rear admirals.

Despite all the efforts put forth by Stalin, Communist victory in Spain was impossible. There were many reasons for this. First of all, over 80 percent of Spanish soldiers and officers fought on the side of the uprising. Even the Communists acknowledged this. And this speaks to the fact that the uprising was not just purely originating from the generals. Spanish soldiers and generals had a choice, and the majority of them fought against the Republic. This, in turn, signals that not everything was all right in the Spanish Republic. Secondly, Spain is a long way from Russia. Stalin could not send to Spain any of his divisions. Even if he did, it would have been impossible to supply an entire division. The third reason for defeat was that the Communist party in Spain was extremely weak. It was forced to make alliances with other parties. The Communists' main allies were the anarchists. In regions where they managed to take control, they abolished currency and made all private property public. The general secretary of the Communist Party of Spain, Dolores Ibárruri, describes her allies in the war in the following manner: "The anarchists organized something like a reign of thieves."¹³ Marshal of the Soviet Union Meretskov, who fought in Spain, calls the anarchists "jolly butchers." Even if Communists themselves had been angels, they were still destined for defeat with such allies.

It is impossible to win without allies, but with allies like those winning was even more impossible. On March 28, 1939, Madrid fell—the last bastion of the Republic.¹⁴ As a result of an almost three-year-long war, General Franco had won. Soviet military advisors were evacuated.

I have always been concerned about the coincidences in timing in this whole history. The war in Spain was a sort of prologue of World War II. The battles in Spain ended, and five months later a new war began, which spread throughout all of Europe and then throughout the world. Was there a link between the war in Spain and World War II? And if yes, what was it?

When I was sixteen years old, studying military history at a military boarding school, we students were urged to read a book by Chief Marshal of Artillery N. N. Voronov. The book is very interesting. Voronov commanded the entire artillery of the Red Army during World War II. He was one of the first to interrogate General Field Marshal F. Paulus in the ruins of Stalingrad. In all of German history, field marshals had never been taken prisoner. Paulus was the first. Even aside from this one episode, there are a lot of interesting moments in Voronov's book. The book is written in a simple and lively fashion. Voronov had fought in Spain as well. Suddenly, one phrase in this book not only touched me, it wounded me: "The events in Spain deeply upset the Soviet people. Very crowded meetings and gatherings of workers took place in Moscow and other cities. [The] Soviet people expressed their brotherly

solidarity with the Spanish people, who were fighting against wild bands of fascists. During a short time workers and farmers donated millions of rubles to raise funds for the Spanish fighters.”¹⁵

I was shocked by this. In 1936, the Soviet people watched anxiously events in remote Spain, expressed outrage at the actions of the insurgents, held meetings of workers in factories and peasants in the fields, and gathered their hard-earned kopeks to help the Spanish people. Meanwhile, three years before this, the Soviet Union had been ravaged by a terrible famine, which was accompanied by cannibalism and the eating of cadavers. And this did not cause any anxiety to the Soviet people. They did not hold meetings, nor did they collect aid. Soviet people were not upset by the simple fact that their brothers, sisters, and neighbors were dying of hunger by the millions, while Stalin exported grain abroad by the millions of tons. Our people carry responsibility for all the people in the world, while being completely irresponsible toward their own. In 1936 in Spain there were no concentration camps, hostages were not yet being executed, but still the Soviet people were terribly upset and anxious. Meanwhile, slave labor flourished in the Soviet Union, millions of people were in concentration camps and prisons, and this did not upset the Soviet people or make them anxious in the least. On December 27, 1932, internal passports were introduced in the Soviet Union, without which it was impossible to work, find a place to live, or move about around the country. The passports were introduced in the midst of hunger, in order to more effectively counter the flight of the peasant population from starving regions into cities or into more prosperous parts of the country. These passports were handed out only to city dwellers. But the peasants, who comprised the majority of the population, were not supposed to get a passport. The Soviet peasant was relegated to the position of a slave who could not leave his owner. And Stalin’s military advisors, future generals and marshals, instead of fighting for the freedom of their own people, strove to fight for the freedom of Spanish peasants, who unlike the Soviet ones were free and had the right to go anywhere they wanted, including abroad.

Everything I read about the war in Spain surprised me. Here is an example of a fact that at first glance seems of little importance. The most important advisor to the Republican army was Yan Berzin, commander of the 4th Directorate of the General Staff of the Red Army.

What was the 4th Directorate? In the early 1960s the Soviet Union experienced an almost hysterical wave of laudation for the Soviet intelligence agent Richard Sorge. Films and television programs about him were aired, books and articles were published, lectures read, his name was given to streets and places, and projects for monuments were widely discussed. It was declared that Richard Sorge was recruited and trained by Jan Berzin, the chief of the 4th Directorate of the General Staff of the Red Army. Right away, it was explained to the people what the 4th Directorate was. It was the name given to the military intelligence service of the Red Army in the 1920s and 1930s. Now this organization is denoted by three letters—GRU, which in Russian stand for Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces. But why was the head of all Soviet advisors in Spain the chief of intelligence and not some experienced field commander?

During the course of the war, several thousand children of Spanish Communists were transported to the Soviet Union. This is a special and tragic story. They were trained to become fighters on secret fronts during the Cold War in Latin America and Africa. They served as secret agents and special forces. One group was assigned to protect and keep a watchful eye on Fidel Castro. The fate of foreign volunteers in Spain is no less interesting.

Immediately upon arrival in the country, their passports and all other documents were taken away from them. Once he had become part of an international brigade, a volunteer ceased to be a volunteer. He turned into an armed slave, for whom escape was virtually impossible. Somehow, for some reason, fires occurred more frequently in buildings in which the volunteers' documents were kept, and the cars that transported these documents were more frequently in the line of fire. As the result, the majority of fighters from international brigades were left without any documents, while the Soviet intelligence network received real passports and other personal documents for thousands of young men from fifty-four countries. These documents were used by the Military Intelligence to provide authentic identity documents for illegal agents and to improve Soviet document falsification techniques.

Antonov-Ovseenko was called back from Spain to Moscow, arrested, and executed. Yan Berzin returned from Spain to his post as head of the Military Intelligence but soon after was also arrested and executed. Meanwhile, the military advisors who really were fighting, not dealing with politics and espionage, rapidly climbed to the peaks of military power. Some of them fell under Stalin's axe but for other mistakes and errors, not for Spain.

Stalin did not count on military victory in Spain, and understood that it was impossible under such conditions. What was he fighting for? This is no riddle. It is enough to look at the actions of Stalin's diplomats and propaganda from that time period. Three countries with totalitarian regimes—Germany, Italy, and Portugal—were helping General Franco. The Spanish Republic, on a state level, was being helped by the Soviet Union alone. Great Britain and France had policies of nonintervention in Spain's affairs. Soviet propaganda screamed in outrage: children are dying in Spain, while France and Britain issue no reaction! Soviet propaganda scorned Britain and France and accused them of heartless indifference to the fates of Spanish children. Many Communist historians in Russia still cannot forgive Britain and France for their policies of nonintervention. How could they calmly have watched the suffering of the Spanish people? How could they have stayed on the sidelines, while Spanish children were dying?

But the issue was not the fate of children. (In the Soviet Union, Stalin enacted a law on April 7, 1935, that made the death penalty applicable to children aged twelve and older.) Stalin's most obvious goal, which was expressed clearly and openly, was to draw Britain and France into the Spanish war. If this plan had been successful, then a great clash between Germany, Italy, and Portugal on one side and France and Britain on the other would have occurred in the far west of the European continent, on Spanish territory. The Soviet Union was far away. Stalin's advisors and "volunteers" would also have fought, but the war would never have touched the territories of the Soviet Union. All Stalin had to do was pour fuel into a war that was heating up. The international volunteers from fifty-four countries were also a part of his plan. Stalin's agents all over the world agitated honest young men to go to Spain. Stalin was generous with money to fund the agitators, paid for the travels and living costs of the volunteers, and armed the international brigades. His plan was simple: to draw citizens of the entire world into war. First separate citizens, then entire groups, and then the governments of the various nations would have been forced to rescue their citizens. This would have meant a conflict, one way or another, with the governments of Franco, Hitler, Mussolini, and Salazar.

But the war in Spain never went beyond its borders. All the efforts of Stalin's political agents, diplomats, and spies were not enough to spread the Spanish fire throughout Europe. Stalin did not blame his generals, because military victory could not be expected. But he

did blame his spies and diplomats for not expanding the war in Spain to the rest of Europe. That is why Berzin, Antonov-Ovseenko, and the rest were executed. After this failure, Stalin drastically changed directions. By the end of 1938, when the war in Spain was clearly quieting down, when the defeat of the Communists became obvious, the exiled Trotsky in distant Mexico sensed the change in Stalin's politics. He warned the entire world about this. In November 1938, Trotsky wrote: "Stalin finally untied Hitler's hands, as well as [those of] his enemies, and pushed all of Europe towards war."¹⁶ This was written a month after the British premier, Lord Chamberlain, upon return from Munich, joyfully waved around a piece of paper and declared that he had brought peace. Trotsky wrote these words when Mussolini still considered himself a peacemaker, and Hitler had not yet issued a directive about preparations for the invasion of Poland or France.

In these sweet months, Europe drew a breath of relief and believed that there would be no war, while Trotsky already knew that it would soon come, and knew who would be responsible for it. In order to fully believe Trotsky, let us listen to another one of his prophecies, uttered on June 21, 1939. At that time intense talks between Britain, France, and the USSR against Germany were under way. Nothing hinted at the possibility of any sort of unanticipated event or complication. Trotsky, however, warned: "The USSR will move its entire mass towards the borders of Germany precisely at the moment when the Third Reich will be drawn into a fight for a new division of the world."¹⁷

Everything happened just as Trotsky had predicted. In the next year, 1940, Germany fought against France, while Stalin "with all his masses" crushed the neutral countries on his western borders, making his way toward Germany. Even now, over sixty years later, having read Trotsky's generalizations and predictions and appraised their accuracy, we have to ask: how could he know all this? Trotsky did not keep any secrets. He was the organizer of the Communist takeover of Petrograd in 1917, he was the creator of and a former commander of the Red Army, the Soviet representative at Brest-Litovsk, the first leader of Soviet diplomacy, a former leader of the USSR, and a former helmsman of the World Revolution. He knew better than anyone the nature of Communism, of the Red Army, and of Stalin. Trotsky said that all his predictions were based on open Soviet publications. Trotsky was the very first in the world to understand Stalin's game, which was not understood by the Western leaders, and which at first was not understood by Hitler.

Stalin's game, however, was very simple. Trotsky himself was the victim of such a game, which is why he understood it. Stalin, in alliance with Zinovyev and Kamenev, removed Trotsky from power in the Soviet Union. Then, in alliance with Bukharin, he removed Zinovyev and Kamenev. Then he removed Bukharin as well. Stalin removed generations of Dzerzhinsky's secret police henchmen through the hands of Genrikh Yagoda. Then Yagoda and his generation were removed through the hands of Nikolai Ezhov. Then Stalin removed Ezhov and his generation through the hands of Lavrenti Beria, and on and on it went.

Stalin continued his game on the international arena as well, and Trotsky could see this. German Nazism for Stalin was an instrument that could be used to crush the democratic regimes in Europe through Hitler's hands, and then finish Hitler off.

German Nazism could start a war, and the war could grow into a revolution. For Stalin, Hitler was a purifying storm over Europe. Hitler could do that which was inconvenient for Stalin to do himself. Stalin's politics were extremely simple. In Spain, he was unsuccessful in bringing Germany to a clash with Great Britain and France. But the hope

was not lost, because they could be brought to a clash in Poland. So in the end of 1938 Stalin drastically changed all his propaganda. All anti-Hitler propaganda in the Soviet Union was brought to an abrupt stop. Now Stalin's priority was to calm Hitler: go to Poland, I will not be in your way.

When I was very young, I was surprised by an image: two generals are standing and smiling. One is Hitler's general, the other Stalin's. This photo was taken in September 1939, during the joint Soviet-Nazi parade commemorating the bloody division of Poland between Stalin and Hitler. I was drawn to this shot like a magnet. The German general was the famous tanker Guderian. He has a friendly smile. But this does not mean anything. Behind the friendly smile, he obviously hides cruel intentions. But who is this naïve Soviet commander? Why is he smiling? Obviously, he was fooled by the Nazis. The naïve Soviet commander was Brigade Commander S. Krivoshein. And if Krivoshein had pleasant conversations with a Nazi, this does not at all mean that Stalin's commander was fooled by the German. In his memoirs, he told of the mood among his subordinates: "We made a pact with the Germans, but this does not mean anything. . . . Now is the best time for a final and constructive resolution of all world problems."¹⁸

The joint Soviet-Nazi military parade was such an unexpected and unusual event that no Soviet commander would take the challenge of developing specific details of such a parade. Before making any decision any military officer would make sure that his superior officer approved and supported it, and the superior would do the same with his higher command. In any case all the details were supposed to be immediately reported to and vetted by Stalin. In this particular case we shouldn't blame Soviet military officers for lack of initiative or for being incapable of making decisions on their own. After all, the joint military parade is a political military manifestation of the intentions of both nations to the rest of the world. No one can do this without the clearance of every single detail at the highest political level. This is why we have every reason to believe that from the Soviet side the chief stage director of this show was Stalin; nobody else would ever dare to take such responsibility.

At that point Stalin was not afraid of Hitler. In August 1939 Stalin cheated him, and in September Stalin was openly making Hitler look ridiculous. The German side was represented by Panzer general Heinz Guderian. His rank was equal to lieutenant-general, and at the time he was a corps commander. According to military-diplomatic etiquette and traditions, the Soviet side was supposed to be represented by a commander of equal rank. But Stalin sent Semion Krivoshein, who was a brigade commander and whose rank was *Combrig*—two ranks beneath Guderian. There were plenty of senior Soviet military officers in Brest at this moment whose rank equaled that of Guderian, including the 4th Army commander, *Comcor* Vassiliy Chuykov. But Stalin decided to send a low-ranking *Combrig* for the joint parade.

Stalin's message to Hitler was simple: you sent a corps commander to greet me, but you were only worthy of being greeted by a simple *Combrig*.

And that was not all. Stalin opted to send a brigade commander who several months prior was in Spain, where he bravely fought against German Panzers. To rub it in, Stalin decided to humiliate Hitler further—Semion Krivoshein, the commanding Soviet officer of the joint Soviet-Nazi military parade in Brest, was Jewish.

The majority of contemporary historians believe that Stalin was afraid of Hitler and was trying to avoid giving him any reason for attack. Stalin's attitude in September 1939 proves the opposite.

Stalin's Trap for Hitler

According to this agreement, it turned out that Hitler started the war. This was beneficial for us from the military and from the moral standpoint. With his actions, he would provoke war with France and England, by going against Poland. We could remain neutral.

—N. KHRUSHCHEV

Stalin turned out to be a rare strategist who planned history, a phenomenal tactician who organized victories under a foreign flag and with foreign hands.

—A. AVTORKHANOV, *ORIGINS OF PARTOCRACY*

In the beginning of May 1939, on the border between Mongolia and China near the river Khalkhin-Gol, an armed conflict occurred between Soviet and Japanese troops. Mongolia was under Soviet control. The adjoining Chinese territory was occupied by Japan. The clash of Soviet and Japanese troops turned into battles, fought with the use of aviation, artillery, and tanks. Nobody declared war, but the intensity of armed operations grew. On June 1, 1939, the government of the Soviet Union officially declared: "We will defend the borders of the Mongolian People's Republic as we defend our own."¹

Actions went according to those words. Precisely on that day, June 1, 1939, the deputy commander of the Byelorussia military district G. K. Zhukov was summoned from Minsk to appear in Moscow. On the following day, Zhukov flew out of Moscow to Mongolia. There, he took command of the Soviet and Mongolian troops and defended Mongolia from Japanese aggression just as he would have defended the territory of his own country.

Stalin ordered Soviet troops in Mongolia to be armed with the most modern weapons. Upon a direct order from Stalin, a group of the best Soviet pilots, who had battle experience in Spain and China, was sent to Mongolia. Each pilot had in previous battles shot down at least ten enemy planes. The Soviet pilots managed to turn the situation to their advantage and established air superiority above the theater of operations. On August 20, 1939, in the Mongolian sky, five Soviet I-16 fighters for the first time successfully used air-to-air RS-82 rocket missiles, equipped with remote detonators.²

Each side increased its power. Soviet troops under Zhukov's command were united into the First Army group. The Japanese forces formed the Sixth Army. During the course of endless exhausting battles, Zhukov prepared a radical solution to the problem—a sudden, crushing defeat of the Japanese Sixth Army.

Meanwhile, the tensions in Europe rose. Hitler demanded a review of the Versailles Treaty. In accordance with this treaty, Eastern Prussia was separated from the main part of Germany, and the city of Danzig was declared a free city. Hitler demanded to be given a corridor through Polish territory to build a highway and a railroad between Eastern Prussia and mainland Germany. Additionally, the city of Danzig was to become a part of Germany. The Polish government refused to satisfy Hitler's demands. Great Britain guaranteed Poland's safety. Treaties guaranteeing mutual aid were signed between Great Britain, France, and Poland. The governments of Great Britain and France decided to attract the Soviet Union to their side. This was a monstrous and fatal mistake.

If the USSR had been interested in safeguarding peace in Europe, it would not have needed agreements with Great Britain and France. Stalin could have solved the problems of Europe's safety on his own. He only had to make his position clear to Hitler: If Hitler were to begin a war against Poland, then he would not receive Soviet oil, grain, cotton, iron ore, magnesium, chrome, zinc, nickel, and tin. Without these things, Hitler could not have fought. It was possible to give an even harsher ultimatum: to declare independently of Britain, France, and Poland that the Soviet Union would defend Polish territory from German aggression as if it was its own, as it defended Mongolian territory from Japanese aggression. It would not matter that the Polish government might not wish to have Soviet troops on Polish territory. When Germany crushed the Polish army and dismantled the Polish government, the Red Army would step into Poland and fight Germany. An invasion of Poland by the Germans would be a signal for the Red Army to get ready for action. After the fall of the Polish state, the Polish people would continue resistance, and would accept any help which the Soviet Union would be willing to give in unlimited quantities.

In the summer of 1939 Hitler should have been reminded that Soviet pilots, sappers, tankers, artillerymen, and saboteurs fought in Spain against German military specialists. There the war lasted almost three years. Sending soldiers and arms to Spain was difficult. Poland was not Spain. Poland was much nearer. The Soviet Union could send any number of "volunteers" to Poland—5 or 10 million, plus any number of tanks, airplanes, and artillery. Hitler should have been told that in the event of aggression against Poland, the Soviet Union would give asylum to Polish refugees, would take in any number of Polish children, would offer training to Polish partisans and supply them with necessary equipment. In this case, war against Poland could not be a lightning war. It would be a war of attrition, and Germany did not have the resources for such a war. That is how Stalin should have behaved. But he, for some reason, insisted on having talks with Great Britain and France.

If a novice player sits down to play cards with a pro, he usually makes only one mistake: he picks up his cards. . . . On August 11, 1939, British and French delegations arrived in Moscow for talks about joint action against Germany. The governments of Great Britain and France repeated the mistake of novice card-players. They sat down at the table with Stalin's pros, and lost the talks. Neither the British nor the French envoys understood Stalin's intentions. Stalin's plan, in fact, was very simple: force France and Britain to declare war on

Germany, or push Hitler to actions that would prompt France and Britain to declare war on Germany.

Having received approval from the British and French governments for talks, Stalin immediately found himself in a situation in which he could not lose. For Stalin, two options were open: either the Soviet delegation would set new demands and force Britain and France to start a war against Germany; or Britain and France would refuse to invade Germany, the talks would fail, and it would be possible to accuse Britain and France of being too lax on the aggressor, while Stalin himself could sign a pact with Hitler.

The Soviet delegation set forth insatiable demands: We have no common border with Germany, so our troops need corridors through Poland!

This demand was unacceptable for Poland, and unnecessary for the Soviet Union. It was unacceptable because the Polish government and people knew the nature of the Red Army and the Soviet secret police. In 1920, the Polish people saw the Red Army on their land, and understood that a new arrival of “liberators” would turn into occupation, mass shootings, and terror against all layers of society. Several months after these talks, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania allowed the placing of Soviet garrisons on their territories—and fell into Communist slavery, which lasted half a century. If Stalin wanted peace, why did he need corridors in Poland? K. E. Voroshilov, then a member of the Politburo, the People’s Commissar for Defense, and a Marshal of the Soviet Union, declared at the talks: “Since the Soviet Union has no common border with Germany . . . there are no roads for engaging the aggressor.”³

The absence of common borders with Hitler’s Germany was a great asset for the Soviet Union. If the Soviet Union was thinking in terms of defense or neutrality in case of war, the Red Army needed no corridors to pass through Polish territory. But Stalin was not planning on defense, and certainly not planning on staying out of the war. He needed corridors through Polish territory on one hand in order to establish a Communist regime in Poland, and on the other hand because the corridors enabled him to deliver a surprise attack to Germany from the rear, in case it became engaged in a war against France and Britain. No other use for passages through Poland can be thought of.

There were other proposals from the Soviet side: Let France and Britain start a war against Germany not only in the case of direct German aggression, but in case of “indirect aggression.”⁴ What “indirect aggression” meant only Stalin and his diplomats knew. If the proposals of the Soviet delegation had been accepted, Stalin (justifiably) could have demanded that France and Britain start a war against Germany in response to any action by the German government. The wording was very loose, and anything can be labeled “indirect aggression.” The scenario of war in this case was simplified: in answer to an action by Germany, France and Britain, according to Stalin’s demands, were forced to act against her. The Soviet Union would act against her as well, but on Polish territory not on its own—very convenient and safe.

In any event, the main theater of operations would unfold between France and Germany, and then fresh Soviet troops would carry out decisive strikes into the rear of German forces through the Polish territories.

During the course of the talks, the French and British delegations, wishing to prove the seriousness of their intents, gave the Soviet side very important information that should not have come into Stalin’s possession.

Stalin knew that Great Britain and France had given their guarantees to Poland. But how serious was their word? The French and British delegations let him know that it was serious! If Hitler started a war against Poland, Great Britain and France would declare war against Germany. This was exactly the information Stalin was waiting for. Hitler thought that his invasion of Poland would go unpunished, like the entrance of German troops into the Rhineland demilitarized zone, like the *Anschluss* (union) of Austria and Germany, like the taking of Czechoslovakia. Stalin now knew that Hitler would be punished for invading Poland. The key to the ignition of World War II fell into Stalin's hands. It remained for Stalin only to give Hitler the green light: Attack Poland, I will not act against you (but France and England will declare war on you).

Half a century later, Soviet generals slowly started to admit that Stalin and the Red Army opened the way for Hitler to invade Poland. Army General A. Mayorov: "In planning the invasion of Poland, Germany feared most of all the Soviet Union, not England and not France. That is precisely why fascist leaders hurried to conclude a pact about [the] invasion with the USSR."⁵

The head of the GRU, Army General P. I. Ivashutin, expressed this sentiment more clearly: "With this pact, Hitler untied his hands for aggression."⁶ Simply stated, if Stalin had not signed a pact with Hitler, there would have been no invasion of Poland, and there would have been no World War II.

If Stalin had wanted peace, in August 1939 he had many opportunities to avert war. One of them was to follow the example of Britain and France and give a guarantee of safety to Poland. Or, he could simply have drawn out his talks with Britain and France, which would have served as a warning to Hitler: Invade Poland, but keep in mind that all of Europe is against you, we are gathered here in Moscow talking about something, and all we have to do is blockade Germany. But Stalin chose his own way. On August 12, 1939, the military delegations of the USSR, Great Britain, and France began talks in Moscow. Stalin's Marshal Voroshilov openly conducted with France and Britain the talks on "containing Hitler's aggression in Europe." Behind the scenes, however, things happened very differently: On August 11—even before the talks got started—Stalin made a decision to start negotiating with Germany for the partition of Poland.⁷ Stalin showed the world his willingness to stop Hitler's aggression, but simultaneously (and even beforehand) offered the German dictator a friendly and helping hand. Thus, Stalin safeguarded himself from failure, no matter what happened. Britain, France, and Germany were clearly about to engage in a massive struggle. Stalin kept up, openly or secretly, friendly relations with all the participants in this struggle and at the same time incited them to act more and more aggressively.

On August 19, 1939, Stalin made a series of extremely important decisions, which had consequences for the course of world history. On that day, Stalin decided to stop the talks with Britain and France. On that same day, the German ambassador to Moscow, Friedrich von der Schulenburg, received Stalin's draft of the impending mutual agreement with the directions that "the agreement will be in force only given the simultaneous signing of the special protocol on points of interest to the Agreeing Parties, regarding foreign policy."⁸ Hitler didn't know that signing this agreement signified the start of World War II. Stalin did.

On that same day, August 19, according to Stalin's orders the Soviet Union began a mobilization of the Red Army. Earlier, Stalin had given firm approval of conducting a sudden crushing operation to defeat the Japanese Sixth Army in Mongolia. On August 19, 1939,

a coded cable from Zhukov informed Stalin that the main goal had been reached, that is, that the Japanese did not suspect the impending attack. Stalin gave his final approval, and Zhukov crushed the Japanese Sixth Army. Zhukov conducted a brilliantly sudden, quick, and audacious operation. The lightning-speed defeat of the Japanese Sixth Army was a prelude to World War II.

On that same day, August 19, 1939, a secret meeting of the Politburo took place, at which Stalin gave a speech. This meeting of the Politburo has never been reported. On the contrary, a lot of efforts were made to convince the whole world that such a meeting never took place. Stalin himself told the newspaper *Pravda* on November 30, 1939, that any report of a meeting of the Politburo on August 19, 1939, "is a sheer invention and lie."

Years went by. The Soviet Union rotted and fell apart. Archives opened slightly. The advisor to the Russian president, Colonel General D. A. Volkogonov, published an article in the newspaper *Izvestia* on January 16, 1993: There was a meeting of the Politburo on August 19, 1939. The general had [the] protocols in his hands. General Volkogonov says that only secondary questions that were discussed at that meeting are preserved in the archives. But even this revelation meant an end to public lies. With one line in a newspaper article, general Volkogonov disclosed the lies of all Soviet leaders, including Stalin.

In the meantime, more brave and more truthful scientists continued the search. And the document was found. It was kept in the Special Archives of the USSR, fund 7, index 1, document 1223. Tatyana Semenovna Bushueva, a talented Russian historian, found it. The document was first published in the December 1994 issue of *Novyi Mir*. This document finally proved that there was a meeting of the Politburo on that date. It turned out that Stalin did indeed speak on that date, and not about secondary problems, but about most vital ones. The document reveals that Stalin spoke of matters of primary, not secondary, importance.

The Russian historical community still denies the validity of this document, claiming it is unclear how and when the document was made. On the other hand, many recently declassified documents support the validity of this account. Let's look at, for instance, a record in the diary of the general secretary of the Comintern, Georgi Dimitrov, made on September 7, 1939. In the company of Molotov and Zhdanov, Stalin explained his new line of foreign policy to the leader of the Comintern: "The war is between two groups of capitalist nations . . . but we are not against it, if they fight a bit and weaken each other. It would be good if Germany could destabilize the positions of the wealthiest capitalist nations (of England especially). Hitler, without knowing it, is weakening the foundations of the capitalist system. . . . We, in the meantime, are able to maneuver, to nudge one country on against the other, so that the fight will be more intense."⁹

Below, as a source of comparison, are several excerpts from Stalin's speech at the Politburo session from August 19, 1939: "If we accept Germany's proposal about the conclusion of a pact regarding invasion, she will of course attack Poland, and France and England's involvement in this war will be inevitable. Western Europe will be subjected to serious disorders and disturbances. Under these conditions, we will have many chances to stay on the sidelines of the conflict, and we will be able to count on our advantageous entrance into the war. . . . It is in the interest of the USSR—the motherland of workers—that the war unfolds between the Reich and the capitalist Anglo-French block. It is necessary to do everything within our powers to make this war last as long as possible, in order to exhaust the two sides. It is precisely for this reason that we must agree to signing the pact, proposed by Germany, and work on making this war, once declared, last a maximum amount of time."

In 1924, Hitler wrote in his book *Mein Kampf* (Chapter XIV): “Already the one fact of concluding an alliance between Germany and Russia would mean [the] inevitability of a future war, the outcome of which would be predetermined. Such a war could only mean the end for Germany.”¹⁰ Fifteen years went by, and on August 19, 1939, Prime Minister and People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR Vyacheslav Molotov, on Stalin’s orders, handed to the German ambassador in Moscow von Schulenburg a plan for the nonaggression pact. Stalin’s proposals were so attractive that Hitler accepted. Hitler correctly predicted his fate. As he foretold, the alliance with Moscow meant inevitable war, the outcome of which was predetermined. This war meant the end for Hitler’s Germany.

Results of the Moscow Pact

Stalin was craftier than Hitler. Craftier and more sly.

—A. ANTONOV-OVSEENKO

On August 23, 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed an agreement in Moscow about the destruction of the Polish state and the division of the Polish territories. Poland had mutual assistance agreements with France and the United Kingdom and, therefore, the attack by the Soviet Union and Germany automatically led to a European—and hence world—war. Indeed, in eight days, on September 1, 1939, World War II broke out. It was a direct and unavoidable result of the agreement reached in Moscow.

The USSR-Germany agreement is traditionally called the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. This moniker misleads and does not truly reflect the essence of what happened. The pact that was signed in Moscow was a plot between Hitler and Stalin to conduct an aggressive war in Europe together. Therefore, that agreement in effect was a Stalin-Hitler pact. Furthermore, in international practice it is much more common to use not the names of the statesmen that concluded the agreement, but the place where the documents were signed: the Munich Agreements, the Warsaw Pact, the Baghdad Pact, and the Geneva Agreement. Therefore, in accordance with common diplomatic practice, the more precise name of the pact would be the 1939 Moscow Agreement on the Start of World War II. Both parties received approximately equivalent shares—part of Poland went to Hitler, the other part went to Stalin. However, just eight days after signing the Moscow pact, Stalin violated it. Hitler started a war of aggression against Poland with hope that his ally Stalin would do the same. But Stalin cheated Hitler. On September 1 and in the subsequent two weeks the Soviet troops stood next to the Polish borders without conducting warfare and crossing the borders. The explanation of the Soviet government to the German counterpart was: the time has not come yet for action by the Red Army. As a result, the entire fault for the beginning of the war fell upon Germany, upon Hitler and his entourage. They entered world history as the chief and only cause of World War II. Poland was divided not in the Imperial Chancellery, but in the Kremlin. Hitler was

not present, Stalin was. But Hitler is at fault for the starting of the war, while Stalin is not. Stalin entered history as an innocent victim and the liberator of Europe.

The invasion of the German troops into Poland had other consequences too: on September 3, 1939, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany. Already on the third day Germany was involved in a two-front war; that is, it wound up in an unwinnable situation. Since Germany practically lacked strategic raw materials, the two-front war was fatal for Germany.

Lack of raw materials not only prohibited Germany from conducting a two-front war, but also a prolonged single-front war. The only hope was for blitzkrieg—instant defeat of the opponent. France could be defeated in a lightning war, but Great Britain is an island nation. To defeat Britain, long and serious preparation is needed, as well as a powerful navy that is equal to or exceeds the British navy, and air dominance is needed too. The German navy lagged significantly behind the British navy. German air power was insufficient to crush British industry and achieve air superiority. Therefore, on the third day the war already looked long and unpromising for Germany.

Furthermore, Britain had a special relationship with the United States. The United States could side with Britain at any moment that was convenient. Germany did not have such allies. Only while he was in a position of power could Hitler rely on Stalin's friendship. In a prolonged war against Britain and her allies, Hitler would inevitably exhaust his resources. In September 1939, the German government repeatedly reminded the government of the USSR about their obligation and demanded the Red Army's invasion of Poland according to the agreement. The Soviet government would refuse—not right away, but with a two- to three-day delay. For example, in response to the German demarche of September 3, the head of the Soviet government and its foreign minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, responded on September 5: "We agree with you that concrete action has to be taken at an appropriate time. However, we consider that such [a] time has not come yet. It is possible that we are mistaken, but it appears to us that excessive haste could cause us harm and facilitate unification among our enemies."¹

The German government kept repeating its demands and kept getting refused. Red Army units started military action in Poland only after two and a half weeks—September 17. Stalin's troops committed similar, or maybe even worse, atrocities in Poland, but Great Britain and France did not declare war on the Soviet Union. Great Britain, France, and their allies were interested in preventing Germany from using Soviet strategic resources. To do so, it was necessary to keep Stalin at their side at any cost and, in case of war between Germany and the Soviet Union, to keep the Red Army from being defeated.

As a result of the pact signed in Moscow in 1939 Stalin achieved a war, one which he desired and for which he had planned and prepared for a long time: The nations of Western Europe were mired in a destructive war, but the Soviet Union remained neutral. Now Stalin could wait for the total exhaustion and self-destruction of Central and Western Europe. Hitler guessed Stalin's intentions and in 1941 suddenly and almost fatally struck the Soviet Union. In this critical situation, Stalin received free aid from the United States and Great Britain, which in volume and quality did not have a historical precedent. At the same time, the Soviet role in unleashing World War II was quickly and thoroughly forgotten. In the final count, Poland, for whose freedom the Western European states had entered World War II, did not gain its freedom, but was given, along with all of Central Europe and part of Germany, into Stalin's control.

It is customary to consider Britain and France among the victors. However, this is clearly a mistake. The purpose for which Great Britain and France entered World War II was ensuring Poland's independence. This aim was not achieved as a result of the war; therefore, there is no cause to celebrate victory.

As a final result of the Moscow pact, Hitler committed suicide and Stalin became the unbound Red ruler of a huge anti-Western empire, created with the West's help. At the same time, Stalin managed to keep his reputation of a naïve, trustful simpleton, and Hitler entered history as a duplicitous villain. It is accepted that Stalin was not ready for war, but Hitler was ready. But the one who wins the war is the one who prepares for war by dividing his enemies and making them fight each other, not the one who makes loud pronouncements.

19

Blitzkrieg in Poland and Mongolia

It was the Russians who first put forward the idea of amassing mobile units.

—COLONEL GENERAL F. HALDER, CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF OF
GERMAN LAND ARMIES

In August 1939, on the river Khalkhin-Gol in Mongolia, aside from a crushing blow there were other possible choices for action. Soviet troops could have, for example, taken defensive positions and postponed the prepared attack. Aggression is always risky. In the event of Soviet success, Japan would receive a lesson to last for years to come. In the event of failure, the entire world would talk of Stalin's army purges and accuse him of making the army unfit for fighting. In the event of failure, Zhukov could be executed, but his blood would not wash away the military's disgrace.

On Saturday, August 19, 1939, Stalin sent to Zhukov only one code word: "Good." A few hours later, Zhukov delivered the blow. In Moscow, that historical day, August 19, had just ended, but in Mongolia the sun was already rising over a new day. At 5:45 AM, 153 Soviet bombers, under the cover of a corresponding number of fighters, carried out a surprise raid over Japanese air bases and command posts. Artillery joined in immediately. The artillery softening-up was short (2 hours, 45 minutes), but unbelievably intense and powerful. During the course of the artillery action, Soviet aviation carried out a second raid, and at 9:00 AM tank units broke through Japanese defenses. Zhukov's plan was simple. He conducted a classic operation of encirclement. Zhukov had a relatively weak center and two powerful flank groups. The center only holds the enemy, while the strike groups at the flanks do not enter into prolonged battles but go around the main centers of resistance, and determinedly head forward. On August 23, the fourth day of the attack, the circle drawn around Japanese troops was tightened, and the rout began.¹

The operation on the Khalkhin-Gol was brilliant in planning and in execution. Zhukov took a lot of risks, but they were justified. Zhukov ordered the air bases moved as close to the front lines as possible. This allowed airplanes to carry less fuel and more bombs. The intensity

of the use of aviation grew sharply: planes took off, and before they even reached cruising altitude, unloaded their bombs, quickly returned, took more bombs, and repeated the process. When Soviet tanks went far ahead, aviation could support them without relocating the bases. Zhukov moved hospitals and supply bases to the front lines as well—supplying ammunition, fuel, and everything necessary for battle was carried out quickly and efficiently, and evacuation of the wounded did not demand excessive time, so after a short time the soldier found himself on the operating table. Zhukov moved his and all other command posts to the front lines, so he was personally able to see the battlefield panorama, and when the troops moved forward, it was no effort for him to move his command post after them. During the preparations for this offensive, Zhukov forbade almost all use of radio communication. Communication was conducted mainly through wires with short sentences, which were understood only by the two people speaking. The operation was prepared in complete secrecy. Each officer received directions only within the frames of his duties and had no concept of the overall plan, the scope, or the dates of the offensive. Actually, many people did not know about the offensive at all. Zhukov fooled not only the Japanese spies but, before all, his own soldiers and officers. Until the last moment, they thought that they were preparing defenses for a prolonged period. If his own soldiers and officers believed this, the enemy surely did as well.

Disinformation gave the desired results: there had never been such a crushing defeat in all of Japanese history. The defeat of the Japanese Sixth Army on the Khalkhin-Gol had strategic consequences. Japanese aggression in the direction of Mongolia and of the Soviet Union was thwarted. Japanese generals decided to not take any more risks. Their efforts from then on were aimed in a different direction—against the United States and the British colonies. In the fall of 1941, during months critical for the Soviet Union, Japanese generals still heeded the memory of Khalkhin-Gol and did not dare attack.

Khalkhin-Gol was the first lightning war of the twentieth century; it was blitzkrieg in the purest form. It was the first time in history that large masses of tanks were used correctly: to strike in depth. This was the prime example of unseen concentration of artillery in tight areas of the front. It was an example of absolute surprise attacks—during the first hour and a half of battle, the Japanese artillery did not fire a single shot and not a single Japanese plane rose into the air.

At the time that the Soviet army was conducting its operation at Khalkhin-Gol, the German army had no experience of conducting lightning-speed offensive operations and was not even conducting any large-scale training operations using tank masses for sudden breakthrough into the depth of the enemy's defenses. The German command planned to conduct the first of such training exercises in the fall of 1939.² Due to Germany's invasion of Poland and the beginning of World War II, these training exercises were never conducted.

On August 29, 1939, Stalin gave Zhukov the title of Hero of the Soviet Union for his lightning defeat of the Japanese Sixth Army. On September 1, Germany attacked Poland. It is interesting to compare the two lightning operations: the Soviet one in Mongolia, and the German in Poland. The difference lay in the fact that the whole world witnessed the German actions in Poland. Embassies from all over the world were located in Warsaw; there were many foreigners in Warsaw and other Polish cities, many journalists in particular. They all witnessed the war and described it in their newspapers and magazines. Hitler's propaganda demonstrated to the entire world the amazing successes of German troops. The whole world

saw the menacing footage on their screens: dive-bombers roaring wildly as they flew toward the ground, dropping their deadly loads, and soaring back into the clouds, tanks breaking Polish barricades, letting through hordes of cheerful motorcyclists.

The Red Army's operation in Mongolia, on the other hand, was carried out on hot desert steppes, where there were no international observers and journalists. Few people knew about the operation at the time. For obvious reasons, the Japanese government did not rush to tell the world about the defeat of the Sixth Army in Mongolia. Surprisingly, the Soviet propaganda also did not rush to announce its victory.

During World War II, Major General D. Ortenberg was the editor-in-chief of the central military newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Red Star). He was directly subordinate to Stalin and had many meetings with him. Before the war, he was the editor-in-chief of the *1st Army Group* newspaper at Khalkhin-Gol. Major General D. Ortenberg testifies that Stalin personally forbade publishing materials concerning the defeat of the Japanese Sixth Army. "In central newspapers all materials about Khalkhin-Gol effectively went to the trash bin: there was a strict order from Stalin to not print anything about the Khalkhin-Gol events."³ We can check Ortenberg's statement ourselves. It suffices to leaf through *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, and *Krasnaya Zvezda* from those days—there is not a word about the brilliant lightning-speed defeat of an entire Japanese army!

All Soviet propaganda was extremely and severely centralized. Stalin's empire ran the most powerful and perfected system of censorship. In Stalin's empire, any printed product could be published only after a censor gave permission. Without the permission, even bus tickets could not be printed. The principle of selection of information was extremely simple: hide any defects, catastrophes, and mistakes and praise any accomplishments. The farms produced slightly more milk, dug slightly more potatoes, a new factory was built—those were the reported news. But here we have a true accomplishment: the defeat of an entire Japanese army. This was an unprecedented historical event. Nobody had ever beaten the Japanese. During the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–5 Russians had especially suffered from the hands of the Japanese. Here came a remarkable revenge, huge trophies! The Red Army opened a new chapter in the art of war. The defeat was achieved by a new, previously unseen method.

Yet, Stalin ordered silence. Why? Because he was preparing the same sort of defeat, only on a much grander scale, for all of Europe. Stalin's interest lay in concealing the might of the Red Army, keeping silent its capability for delivering crushing surprise attacks. Stalin's interest lay in letting the whole world believe in the backwardness of the Red Army and its inability to conduct modern warfare. Stalin's interest lay in catching Hitler off-guard, in not scaring him.

At first glance, the Red Army's lightning operation in Mongolia and the German blitzkrieg in Poland are not comparable in scale. The German troops participating in the invasion of Poland numbered 1.6 million soldiers and officers. The Soviet group in Mongolia numbered only 57,000 men. In numbers of people, the German operation surpassed the Soviet one twenty-eight times. However, if one looks at the number of tanks and airplanes, the numbers are comparable. The German operation against Poland had the participation of four times more airplanes, and six times more tanks, than the Soviet operation in Mongolia. The numbers are quite on the same scale.

An analysis of the quality of weapons is even more interesting. The Red Army used long-range bombers in Mongolia; Germany had no such planes.⁴ If one examines the quality

of tanks, the picture also favors the Red Army. The Pz-I was the most prevalent German tank that participated in the blitzkrieg in Poland. There were 1,445 of them. This tank had a 100-horsepower engine. Earlier models of it had 57-horsepower engines. The second in numbers was the German Pz-II. There were 1,226. The earlier models of it had 130-horsepower engines, the later models, 140-horsepower. Germany had only 98 Pz-IIIs, and 211 Pz-IVs. The first models of these tanks had 250-horsepower engines, the later ones, 300-horsepower.

In contrast, Soviet troops in Mongolia used the BT-5 tanks, with 400-horsepower engines, and the BT-7 with 500-horsepower. The sum power of tank engines used in Mongolia constituted more than half of the sum power of tank engines used by Germany in Poland. In the area of tank armament, the Red Army clearly surpassed the Germans. At Khalkhin-Gol, practically all Soviet tanks were armed with the most powerful tank cannon of that time, with 45-mm .46-caliber barrels. In addition, Soviet armored automobiles were armed with the same cannon. The German army, or any other army in the world, had nothing comparable at the time. The majority of German tanks during the blitzkrieg in Poland had no cannon at all. The Pz-I only had machine guns. The Pz-II had 20-mm cannon. The Pz-III had weak 37-mm cannon, and there were less than a hundred tanks of this model. The Pz-IV had 75-mm cannon with a very short barrel, which was not meant for and not fit for battle against enemy tanks.

In 1939, the same arms gap could be seen between the Red Army and the *Wehrmacht* in terms of artillery. Germany entered World War II with field artillery developed in the time of World War I, while the Red Army had the best cannons, howitzers, and mortars in the world, developed right on the eve of World War II. For every thousand German soldiers during the blitzkrieg in Poland there were less than two tanks. For every thousand Soviet soldiers in Mongolia there were almost nine much more powerful tanks. In other words, Soviet troops at Khalkhin-Gol formed a relatively small army, but were equipped to the limit with the most modern and sophisticated weapons.

There was also a big difference in the conditions under which the operations were conducted. In September 1939, the conditions for conducting a lightning war in Poland were superb. A continuous defense by the Polish army along the perimeter of the country was impossible. Poland, to its misfortune, was an ideal location for the demonstration of tank capabilities. Western Poland formed a wide protrusion, surrounded on three sides by German territory. Its border with Germany stretched two thousand kilometers; after German occupation of Czechoslovakia, the German-Polish border increased by another eight hundred kilometers.⁵

The German army did not have to break through defenses. Ahead of it lay flat terrain, ideal for advance and totally unfit for defense. The river Vistula flows through Poland, but there was no need to cross it. Hitler's troops were located on both sides of the Vistula. There were no other serious water barriers. An attack on Warsaw could be carried out from any direction. The distance from mainland Germany to Warsaw was 230 kilometers, and from the border of Eastern Prussia to Warsaw was 110 kilometers. This meant that there was no need to relocate supply bases—troops could be supplied from stationary bases built during peacetime. There was no need to transfer thousands of tons of ammunition, fuel, and other equipment. In theory, a thrust on Warsaw could be carried out without refueling tanks. Fill up the tanks in Germany, and go! There were no defenses ahead, since they were impossible. There was no need to set up field hospitals, because the wounded could be taken to stationary

peacetime hospitals. Aviation bases also did not need to be moved—the air force could conduct its missions from permanent air bases. Command posts with communication lines also stayed in place in underground bunkers. Only small mobile groups of commanders needed to be sent forward.

However, not everything in Poland went as smoothly as shown in Goebbels's propaganda and as described by some modern followers of Hitler. For some reason it is not popular to speak of this, but the German blitzkrieg in Poland failed. On September 15, 1939, two weeks after the start of World War II, the activity of the German air force substantially dropped; the German army was almost completely out of fuel. This was the level of Hitler's and his generals' understanding of modern warfare.

Forget all the tales by Soviet marshals and academics that the Red Army entered Poland in 1939 out of fear that the Germans might go straight for Moscow. Hitler did not have such strength. Even if he headed for Moscow in October 1939, the same exact thing would have happened to his valiant army that happened in October 1941: it would have sunk in the mud. The *Wehrmacht* lacked the fuel, bombs, and ammunition necessary to wage war against the Soviet Union. In 1939 the Red Army entered Poland for different reasons. Most importantly, there was the fear that Hitler's blitzkrieg would stop. It was already slowing down. Stalin's offensive in Poland allowed Hitler to transfer his forces from the eastern to the western front with maximum efficiency. Imagine the situation: all German tanks and cars are stopped, airplanes do not fly. The German army has many horses, though they are load-bearing horses, not cavalry. In this situation, the Polish cavalry could have shown what it means to have superiority in strategic mobility . . . but once again, Stalin saved Hitler.

From the standpoint of grand strategy the operation in Poland was a total failure for Hitler and his generals. It was the first suicidal act of Hitler's Germany: they entered a war having one enemy—Poland, and in two months brilliantly ended that war having Britain, France, India, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and potentially the United States as enemies. A blitzkrieg cannot be used to win a war against all these nations, and Hitler had no other options. As a result of the blitzkrieg in Poland, Hitler obtained a common border with the “neutral” Soviet Union. Being at war with everyone, Hitler would have been better off having a border with Poland than with the Soviet Union—anything could be expected of comrade Stalin.

One more thing: Poland was not at all crushed by the blitzkrieg.

Immediately after the fall of the government in Warsaw, the Polish government in London was created, and it was acknowledged by most nations of the world and by the League of Nations. According to Polish tradition, underground local governments and an underground state formed on occupied territory. Armed forces were revived. Using the most cautious methods, the Polish Army counted 350,000 soldiers and officers, well trained, organized, and armed. Moreover, Poles fought against Hitler on all fronts: in Britain, France, Italy, Africa, Holland, and the Soviet Union. Starting in 1939, the number of Polish formations fighting Hitler constantly was around one million people. The blitzkrieg started in 1939 in Poland, and ended in 1945 with the storming of Berlin, in which the Polish First and Second armies took part.

We are told that Stalin purged his army, and after 1937–38 it was good for nothing. For some reason, Khalkhin-Gol and the year 1939 are forgotten.

In 1939, the Red Army received a unique and invaluable experience in breaking through powerful field defenses of the Japanese army in Mongolia. At that time not a single army in the world had such experience. From this experience, the right conclusions were drawn: even more attention needed to be given to the issue of breaking through defenses, and even more sophisticated weapons, designed specifically for this purpose, had to be developed. The experience of Khalkhin-Gol showed: if the enemy has dug himself firmly into the ground, aviation is incapable of breaking through such defenses, even if the bombing concentration is 80 tons per square kilometer. Artillery is needed. Soviet artillery was already the most powerful in the world, but from September 1939 began the unfolding of new artillery formations and the construction of new ammunition factories.

The Red Army command not only understood the extreme importance of supplying troops, but had the unique experience of doing it in the extreme conditions at Khalkhin-Gol. The Soviet troops counted 57,000 soldiers, 498 tanks, 500 guns, 385 armored cars, 515 airplanes, artillery transport, automobiles, etc. If everything necessary for life and battle was to be brought to Mongolia from the supply bases in the Baikal military district, the distance to be covered was roughly 1,500 kilometers. But not everything was in storage in the Baikal region. If supplies were to be brought from factories and central storages the distance to be covered was seven to eight thousand kilometers. The last stretch of railroad had very limited load-bearing capacity and ended in a deserted steppe. For the next 650 to 700 kilometers trucks were needed. The most common truck of that period could cover the round-trip of 1,300 to 1,400 kilometers, in good conditions, in roughly five days. The conditions were: heat, dust, no water. People might get by in these conditions, but automobile radiators need water. The troops needed to be supplied with everything. For example, wood to burn in field kitchens. Technology wear and tear was tremendous, as was fuel expenditure. Cars needed to be refueled several times along the way. Once the car had dropped off its cargo at Khalkhin-Gol, it needed to make its way back—and once again, it had to be refueled, so it turned out that the cars had to take away what they had just brought.

To this desert location the Soviets needed to supply by truck 25,000 tons of ammunition, 15,000 tons of fuel and lubricants, 4,000 tons of foodstuffs, 7,000 tons of fuel, and a lot of other cargo. All this was supplied in such a fashion that the enemy did not even suspect preparations for a sudden crushing attack. After such an operation, Soviet command quite clearly understood the meaning of supplies in war.

Nevertheless, Khalkhin-Gol played a mean joke on Stalin and the entire Red Army. In May 1940, Stalin introduced the titles of “general” and “admiral” into the Red Army. Approximately one thousand top Red Army commanders became generals. But only three of them received at that moment the top general rank—General of the Army. At that time, this meant five-star lapels. The first of these men was Zhukov. Zhukov became the first of all Soviet generals. Upon Zhukov’s return from Mongolia, Stalin entrusted Zhukov with the most powerful of his military districts—the Kiev district. In February 1941 he appointed Zhukov to the position of Chief of General Staff. In this position Zhukov prepared for the war against Germany. On the German border (only on a much grander scale) he was to repeat everything he had implemented against the Japanese army. Zhukov created two mighty mobile flank attack groups at the L’vov and Belostok bulges, and one group for an attack in Romania.

Zhukov moved air bases to the very borders, with one hundred—sometimes two hundred—planes in each location. Zhukov moved hospitals, supply bases, command posts to the borders. Zhukov moved to the border thousands of tons of ammunition, fuel, and spare parts for tanks and planes.

Zhukov forbade almost all use of radio communication. Zhukov kept his plans in complete secrecy, and very few people in the Red Army knew what was to be done. Upon the surprise enemy attack, all this had catastrophic consequences. All of Zhukov's activity in 1941 has been attributed to a series of mistakes and miscalculations. But these were not mistakes. In 1941, he was preparing against Germany exactly what he had prepared in August 1939 against the Japanese army at Khalkhin-Gol.

Mobilization

Mobilization is war, in our minds there is no other meaning for it.

—MARSHALL Y. N. SHAPOSHNIKOV, CHIEF OF THE
GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY

From time to time we find a lot of interesting materials in the archives, but we will not find what is most important. Here is why: “How many times have I told you—do whatever you want, but do not leave behind any documents, do not leave any traces.” These are the words of Stalin himself. He uttered them publicly at the Sixteenth Congress of the Communist Party. The records here note the “Homeric laughter of the entire audience.” The congress laughed heartily—comrade Stalin had made a joke. Understandably, Stalin was not talking of himself, but of his opponents, who apparently were guided by the principle of leaving behind no traces or documents. But the congress laughed in vain. Stalin always ascribed his own intentions, principles, and methods to his enemies. Soon after, Stalin executed all his enemies, as well as almost all the delegates present at the Sixteenth Congress who had laughed so heartily. He left a very minimal number of documents about these executions.

Not a single dictator can match Stalin in his ability to cover up the traces of his personal involvement in crimes. Anastas Mikoyan, who beat all records of political survival, tells us how well Stalin kept secrets. Mikoyan was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party from 1923 until 1976—that is, for fifty-three years, for forty years of which he was a candidate or member of the Politburo, the most important power organ of the country, which governed the entire Soviet Union and its satellites. Mikoyan describes a meeting held by Stalin: “Most often there were five people. We met late in the evening or at night, rarely in the afternoon, usually without preliminary notice. There were no protocols or records kept during the course of such meetings.”¹

Air Force Colonel General A. S. Yakovlev: “During the meetings of Stalin’s inner circle there were no stenographers, no secretaries present, no records or protocols were kept.”² Marshal of the Soviet Union D. F. Ustinov was the People’s Commissar of Arms during the

course of the war: “During the meetings and conferences conducted by Stalin, discussions of problems and the making of decisions frequently occurred without records, and often without the corresponding paperwork marking the decision made.”³ In other words, decisions were made but were not fixed on paper, just like in the Mafia.

Marshal of the Soviet Union G. K. Zhukov during the course of the war was deputy to the Commander in Chief, that is, to Stalin: “Many political, military, and general government questions were discussed and solved not only at the official meetings of the Politburo and in the Central Committee Secretariat, but also in the evening at dinner in Stalin’s apartment or at his dacha, where the Politburo members closest to him were usually present.”⁴

Colonel General B. Vannikov was the People’s Commissar of Ammunition: “At the meetings and conferences Stalin had a habit of discussing questions and making decisions without protocols or records. . . . From this it is clear that the understanding of many events just based on documents is incomplete and unclear, and in many cases incorrect.”⁵

Hitler’s meetings were known for being held in the presence of large crowds. Everything said by Hitler was fixed for history by three stenographers and a personal historian. Stalin’s meetings on the other hand were simply secret gatherings of plotters and conspirators, in spirit and in essence. No documents and no traces were left of these meetings. Therefore, as Stalin taught us, we will look not at the words, which are hidden from us, but at the actions, which are in the open.

It is possible that World War II could have not occurred. The choice was up to Stalin. He himself told this to his colleagues at the Politburo meeting on August 19, 1939: “If we make a pact of mutual aid with Great Britain and France, Germany will give up Poland and . . . the War will be averted.” Stalin did not make a pact with Great Britain and France; thereby he did not try to avert a war. This day—August 19, 1939—was a long, difficult day. This was a day filled with hopes and worries. This was the day when Stalin cast his fishing rod into the brown swamp that was Hitler’s Germany. His hook had bait for Hitler: Danzig and half of Poland. Take it! And as a free gift Germany got war against Great Britain and France.

This was the day when doubts crawled into the hearts of Stalin’s colleagues. Stalin had decided to trick Hitler. Would Hitler believe him? Stalin could not possibly always win. Vyacheslav Molotov worked on the scene as the head of the Soviet government and the People’s Commissar of Foreign Affairs. When Molotov received the German ambassador von der Schulenburg in his cabinet in the Kremlin, Stalin, Shaposhnikov, Beria, and Malenkov did not show themselves—they were behind the curtains, in Stalin’s cabinet. Molotov’s conversation with the German ambassador was transmitted to Stalin’s office. Molotov worked brilliantly. The most important thing was not to let the ambassador see Stalin’s interest in the issue of German-Polish relations. Molotov did not reveal this interest; his attitude to the ambassador was: “All right, let Ribbentrop come, perhaps we will agree on something, perhaps we will find a solution to the question of Danzig and Poland.”

After the meeting, Schulenburg went to the German embassy to write a report, while a heated discussion of the outcomes of the meeting was underway in Stalin’s cabinet. The German ambassador had barely reached the embassy when he received a call from the Kremlin: Molotov awaits you for a new meeting. This was a difficult day. And it ended in Stalin’s victory.

At dawn on September 1, 1939, the German army began war against Poland. But in the twentieth century, a war in Europe automatically meant a world war. The war quickly engulfed all of Europe and practically the entire world.

In a strange coincidence of events, it was precisely on this day—September 1, 1939—that the fourth emergency session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR ratified the universal military draft. There had been no such law in the history of the USSR. A surprising thing: while children and adults were taught to fear Hitler, while Hitler was considered to be a tyrant and monster, the country could do without a draft. But as soon as a non-aggression pact was signed, a universal mandatory draft all of a sudden became necessary.

Why did the Soviet Union need it? Soviet historians stated that the USSR took measures of precaution. Marshal of the Soviet Union K. A. Meretskov is one of the many of those who assert that the law had a huge significance and was adopted “in the conditions when World War II had already begun.”⁶

Let us imagine the Polish-German border on that tragic morning: darkness, fog, fire, motors roaring. Very few people in Poland understood what was happening, whether this was a provocation or an unsanctioned border conflict that arose on its own. But the representatives at the USSR Supreme Soviet already knew that this was no provocation, no conflict, and no German-Polish or even European war—this was the beginning of a world war. They knew that they, the representatives, must meet in Moscow and take the corresponding measures. Why did these representatives not act so efficiently when a similar thing happened on the Soviet-German border in 1941?

On the morning of September 1, 1939, it was not only the Polish government and the governments of the Western countries that did not know that World War II had started. Hitler himself did not know it either. He started the war against Poland hoping that it would be a local fight, like the taking of Czechoslovakia. As Colonel General of the Air Force A. S. Yakovlev (at that time an aircraft designer, deputy people’s commissar of aviation industry, and personal advisor to Stalin) concluded: “Hitler was sure that England and France [would] not fight for Poland.”⁷ When, on September 3, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany, this was an extremely shocking and unpleasant surprise for Hitler. He had not anticipated this. For him, a “strange” war against Great Britain and France began on September 3. In the same month, an equally strange peace began in the East.

Any attempt to establish the exact date of the beginning of World War II and the time that the USSR entered into it brings us to the date of August 19, 1939: Stalin stretched a hand of friendship out to Hitler and signed the non-aggression pact, while on the same day he issued an order to gather the representatives of the Supreme Soviet, so that at the time World War II began they were already sitting in the Kremlin and unanimously voting in favor of everything put before them. What a strange coincidence: the road to Moscow is long—for some it takes ten to twelve days. In order to adopt the law on September 1, 1939, the order to gather the representatives was issued on August 19, meaning that on August 19, 1939, someone in Moscow already knew that in a couple of weeks World War II would begin and a new draft law would be needed.

Chief of General Staff and Marshal of the Soviet Union B. M. Shaposhnikov created the theory of mobilization. He authored the book *Brain of the Army*. The third and final volume was published in 1929, and while the Soviet Army existed, this book served as a manual for every Soviet officer and general. On Lenin’s desk, a copy of the book *Mob Psychology* by Gustav le Bon had always been present, and on Stalin’s desk it was Shaposhnikov’s *Brain of the Army*. The key to the success of Shaposhnikov’s book was in the simplicity with which the material was presented, in the crystal-clear argumentation, and in the ability to explain

the most complex problems in terms understandable by anybody. The third, concluding part of the book is the most powerful. In the third volume Shaposhnikov examines the questions of mobilization.

The theory was simple, understandable, logical, and unquestionably correct. Stalin understood it, appraised its worth, and added it to the base of his own strategy. This is why reading Shaposhnikov's works (as well as those of his supporters and opponents) and understanding the course of their thought helps us understand Stalin's actions, which at first glance seem illogical and unexplainable. The theory of mobilization, condensed and explained in layman's terms, consists of the following.

1. To achieve victory in a war, not only efforts of the entire army but full efforts by the entire nation, the people, industry, transport, agriculture, etc., are necessary.
2. The nation cannot exist in a constant state of preparedness for war, just as a man cannot constantly hold a gun in each hand. If he is always holding two guns, he cannot do anything else. Similarly a nation cannot constantly expend all its resources on preparations for war. Constant concentration of forces and expenditure of social resources on war preparations ruin the nation. Therefore, during peacetime the army and the military industry must operate at a minimal level. However, the nation, its people, government apparatus, industry, transport, agriculture, communication channels, ideological apparatus, and so forth must be prepared for a maximally quick and full transition from a peacetime to a wartime regime.
3. Mobilization is the transition of the entire country from a peacetime to a wartime regime. Mobilization cannot be curbed or turned back. Metaphorically speaking, mobilization is similar to thrusting one's arm down, unlatching a holster, and aiming the gun at the enemy with one's finger already on the trigger.
4. Mobilization and war are inseparable. If you take out a gun and aim it at the enemy with your finger on the trigger, you have to shoot. As soon as you begin to mobilize, the enemy will mobilize as well. You take aim, and the enemy does the same, trying to be faster than you by at least a fraction of a second. If you are a tiny bit of a second late, he will kill you.
5. You cannot play games with mobilization: if you often brandish guns and aim them at your neighbors with your fingers on the trigger, the outcome will not be a good one for you.
6. Once the path of mobilization has been chosen, you have to follow it up to the end—start a war.
7. Mobilization cannot be partial. Mobilization is a process similar to pregnancy. A woman cannot be a little bit pregnant—the answer is always “yes” or “no.” The same is true for mobilization in a country: either the entire government apparatus, industry, transport, armed forces, population, and all the national resources are mobilized toward war, or not.

These ideas, in various orders and manners, are voiced by many different authors. B. M. Shaposhnikov differed from his predecessors only in that he expressed the ideas clearly, briefly, and concisely: “Mobilization is not only a symptom of war, it is war itself. An order by the government to declare mobilization constitutes a *de facto* declaration of war. . . . In modern

conditions, a mobilizing country must make a firm decision ahead of time to conduct war. . . . In a general mobilization, it is understood that there can be no more return to peacetime positions. . . . We maintain that only a general mobilization has value, the concentration of all resources and forces necessary for achieving victory.” The book ends with a decisive declaration: “Mobilization is war, and we cannot understand it in any other way.”

Stalin not only shared Shaposhnikov’s views, but he had the same beliefs. Stalin did not make any distinctions between the process of taking power in his country or in the neighboring ones. He knew how to take power in his own country, and he planned to do the same in the neighboring ones. Stalin did not keep his art a secret. On the contrary, he made it into a display for the masses. In his book *On the Foundations of Leninism*, Stalin proved that games are not permissible in the quest for power. We either take control or we do not. Once the task is attempted, it must be carried out to the end. This goes along with the teachings of Niccolo Machiavelli: either you deliver a lethal blow or you do not attack at all; no in-between decisions can exist in politics or in strategy. This also goes along with Shaposhnikov’s ideas: we can either not mobilize at all or we can conduct a full mobilization and enter the war—no partial, in-between positions can be adopted.

There was another problem: mobilization had to be concealed. Long before World War II, Stalin and Shaposhnikov worked out a way to conceal mobilization. For this reason, there was no universal military draft in the Soviet Union until 1939. The army was very selective and did not take in just anybody. This was to show what a peace-loving people we were. The age requirement for entering the armed services was twenty-one. This is strange. Why not draft at eighteen or nineteen, right out of school—let the boy serve his term and be free? By age twenty-one a man could have found a job and started a family, while his future remained uncertain: would they draft him or not? Nobody could really explain why the army had to take men at age twenty-one and not younger.

There was, however, a lot of thought put into this system. It was like a dam on a river: not everyone was let through (that is, drafted), only some, while the rest amassed on the other side. At the necessary moment a universal draft could be instituted (only the pretext had to be invented), and all those who did not earlier serve in the army could be called in. During the intervening years, there were many of them saved up.

The moment came—September 1, 1939. On this day, a universal military draft was instituted, and all those who had not served earlier began to be taken in. In every separate case the calling of a mature man to the army did not raise suspicion that a big war was looming: every man must serve his country, so this or that Ivan had to do now what his friends did before.

Stalin had another tactic in reserve: according to the new law, the draft age was reduced from twenty-one to nineteen, and in some categories to eighteen.⁸ My own father was among this group—he had just turned eighteen at the time.

The simultaneous draft of three age groups (never seen before), and the draft of all those who had not served earlier, placed a double burden on the shoulders of the nation. On the one hand, the economy was deprived of all these workers; on the other hand, they all had to be clothed, fed, equipped, and housed somewhere (try to find a place for at least one million new soldiers!). This was an explosive development of military might.

After 173,000 reservists were drafted in the second half of July 1939 to support the troops of the Trans-Baikal military district and the 1st Army Group in Mongolia, the Red

Army (without the navy interior troops or border guards) numbered 1,871,600 men. By June 22, 1941, the Red Army (again without the navy, interior troops, or border guards) numbered 5,081,000 men.⁹

The law adopted on September 1, 1939, allowed for an increase in the ranks of the Red Army from 1.5 million men in the spring of 1939 to 5.7 million in the spring of 1941 without declaring mobilization and alarming the neighbors.¹⁰ Additionally, this law allowed for the preparation of 18 million reservists, so that at any moment they could fill the ranks with the desired number of soldiers.

This army development had a time limit, because Stalin called several age groups into the Red Army at the same time—in essence, all the young men in the country. The duration of army service for the majority of the population—privates in ground forces and NKVD (Political Police) forces—was two years, so the country had to enter a major war before September 1, 1941. If not, all the young people would go home on September 1, 1941, and then there would be almost nobody left to draft. All these new armies—assault and mechanized corps, tanks, air force, and all other divisions—would have to be disbanded. It is impossible to maintain an armed force of this size without a war: it does not produce anything and it consumes everything produced by the country. The creation of such an army could only lead to war. The modern Russian ministry of defense acknowledges this. “No nation can maintain a mobilized army with any intent other than war: the economy cannot stand the strain, and the mobilized but unused army begins to decay.”¹¹ This was said about the mobilization conducted by Stalin starting on August 19, 1939.

When he made the decision to launch a secret mobilization, Stalin firmly knew that in two years, in the summer of 1941, the Soviet Union must enter into a large war. Without war, no terror could suffice to keep five million soldiers, who have already served their two required years, in their barracks. It would be impossible to retain them in the army after their terms in the army expired. To put it more simply, the decision to enter a large war was made in the Kremlin in August 1939 and the deadline for entering the war was set—the summer of 1941.

Mobilization of the Economy

A doctrine about war fought on enemy territory took hold during the prewar years, which was of a clearly aggressive nature.

—COLONEL S. VAUPSHASSOV, HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION

For many years, the People's Commissariat of Defense Industry was in charge of arms production in the USSR. On January 11, 1939, it was dismantled, and four new People's Commissariats were created instead: one for the shipbuilding industry, one for weapons, one for the aviation industry, and one for ammunition.

The Shipbuilding Commissariat was unofficially called the Submarines *Narkomat* (short for People's Commissariat). In theory, this commissariat produced both civilian and military ships. But in practice, the facts were such that "by 1935 all major shipyards were redesigned for production of military ships."¹ In 1939, Germany entered into World War II with fifty-seven submarines. We are assured that the Soviet Union had no intentions of entering into the war, but in September 1939 it possessed 165 submarines. The submarines matched up to the best world standards.² Some of the submarine designs were developed in Nazi Germany on Soviet orders by the company Deschimag AG Wesser. They say that Stalin trusted Hitler. They should look more carefully into who trusted whom.

In the Soviet Union, the most modern American technology and renowned American engineers were used in the process of submarine production. They say that Stalin was too trustful, but I think Roosevelt possessed more of that particular quality. Aside from American, German, British, Italian, and French accomplishments, the Soviet shipbuilding industry also made its own technological advances. We also had some talented engineers.

From the moment of its founding, the Shipbuilding Narkomat undertook strictly military projects. Moreover, many ships that had earlier been built for civilian needs were now armed and given over to the navy. With just one directive by the Soviet government, on May 25, 1940, the following numbers of civilian ships were handed over to the military: 74 to the Baltic fleet, 76 to the Black Sea fleet, 65 to the North fleet, and 101 to the Pacific fleet. At the

same time, the shipyards of the Narkomat all began to operate on two extended shifts, which practically meant a regime of wartime production. The result of this was that by June 22, 1941, the Soviet Union possessed 218 submarines in its ranks and 91 more in shipyards.

Surface warships were also being built, as well as bought from abroad. For example, right before the war a ship of amazing gracefulness of form and an unusual coloring appeared on the Black Sea. People who did not know what type of ship this beauty was nicknamed it the “blue cruiser.” In fact, the ship was a destroyer leader, not a cruiser. It was called the *Tashkent*. The *Soviet Military Encyclopedia* says of most noteworthy ships that they were “built at one of the domestic shipyards.” However, this is not said about the *Tashkent*; only the year it was accepted into the fleet is mentioned—1940. The usual words are absent because the pride and beauty of the Black Sea fleet, the leader *Tashkent*, was built in fascist Italy and sold to Stalin.³

The *Tashkent* was purchased without weapons. Mussolini would have sold Stalin the weapons as well, but at that time there was nothing in the world that came remotely close to the Soviet 130-mm ship cannon. Therefore, the *Tashkent* was armed with Soviet cannon in the shipyards of Nikolaev.

Italy was not the only country that sold warships to Stalin. On May 31, 1940, the unfinished German cruiser *Lutsow*, renamed the *Petropavlovsk*, arrived in Leningrad and was delivered to the shipyard of shipbuilding plant #189. A cruiser is a huge and complex structure, the building of which would have taken several years to complete, and there was not enough time to introduce changes into its design and to equip it with Soviet weapons. It was decided to build it completely according to German designs and equip it with German weapons, and Germany supplied the weapons.

All this seems unbelievable: May 1940, the heat of the German blitzkrieg in Western Europe, the British fleet blockading the German navy. Hitler had only two options left—either to fight against Britain, for which he needed a powerful fleet, or to seek peace with Britain, for which he also needed a powerful fleet: an enraged Britain would obviously not negotiate with a weak Germany, but instead would demand its immediate withdrawal from all occupied territories. Hitler lagged far behind Britain in the number of above-water ships, and in this critical time he was selling his unfinished, most modern ship to Stalin!

Stalin’s behavior is also surprising: he declared neutrality, but continued to build a gigantic fleet and, moreover, bought warships from countries already at war. The answer to this riddle is simple: in 1940 Germany was already suffering from a terrible deficit of raw materials because her naval routes were blockaded, so Hitler could only buy large enough quantities and assortments of materials from Stalin. In exchange for this, Hitler was forced to sell his technology and weaponry, including his newest planes, cannon, ships, communications devices, firearms, and so forth.

Stalin knew that the German economy was facing a crisis, and he could have chosen not to sell raw materials to Hitler. In that case, the war in Europe would have quickly died down. But Stalin wanted the war to gain strength, so that France, Britain, Germany, and all the other countries would expend themselves. Stalin planned to use their weakened position and establish his own regime in Europe. For this Stalin was building up his fleet, buying military technology from everywhere possible, and feeding Hitler the raw materials he needed.

Some might ask why Stalin’s two hundred submarines and the rest of his navy could not give the kind of resistance that was to be expected from the most powerful underwater fleet

in the world. The answer is simple—this was an attack fleet. It was an instrument created for aggressive warfare. It was very difficult, nearly impossible, to use it in defensive war. “During the course of the war the fleet had to solve problems that were completely unforeseen during its construction. Instead of coordinating their actions with the deep offensive operations of the ground forces, acting near the shores, as the military doctrine dictated, the fleet was forced to secure the naval bases under enemy attack from land and sea and to evacuate troops, population, and property from shoreline cities.”⁴

In March 1939, at the Seventeenth Congress of the Communist Party, the commander of the Pacific fleet, 2nd Rank Flagman N. G. Kuznetsov declared: “The fleet must transform itself, and it will, just like the entire Worker-Peasant Red Army, into the most powerful attack fleet.” Stalin rewarded him for such words by promoting him to People’s Commissar of the Navy. Kuznetsov kept his word—he did his best in order to prepare the Soviet fleet to launch surprise attacks. But entirely different ships with entirely different characteristics are needed for defense: submarine hunters, picket boats, minesweepers, and net-layers. According to Kuznetsov’s orders, all reserves of shells, mines, torpedoes, and ship fuel were transported to the German borders in Liepaja and to the Romanian borders in the river ports of the Danube. There, these reserves were quickly seized by the Germans. The port of Liepaja was located so close to the German border that the battles for the city had already begun on June 23, 1941.⁵ Nobody had prepared to defend Liepaja from a land attack. Aside from everything else, in Liepaja were concentrated (and lost) three quarters of the Baltic fleet’s fuel reserves.

Not only was the basing system of the Soviet navy geared toward aggressive warfare, and its personnel trained to attack, but the armament of the ships was designed exclusively for participation in a war of aggression. Soviet ships, while armed with powerful artillery, mine, and torpedo equipment, had quite weak anti-aircraft armament. The Soviet ships did not have powerful anti-aircraft defenses because Soviet generals had planned to begin the war with a crushing surprise air attack against the enemy’s air bases and the annihilation of his aviation. Contrary to the plans, the war turned out to be of a defensive character, and the Soviet armies and fleets were not the ones to carry out the first attacks. The enemy had air superiority, and the Soviet troops and ships had very weak anti-aircraft defenses. The Shipbuilding Narkomat had been building ships with maximal attacking power and minimal defenses, in order to make the Soviet navy the most aggressive in the world.

The Aviation Narkomat also theoretically produced both military and civilian airplanes. But while it is possible to remember a dozen models of magnificent fighters, bombers, and assault planes, all produced in the tens of thousands, it is not so easy to think of the name of a single civilian aircraft. There was one airplane that, at some level, could be classified as a civilian model, but it was purchased from America, not created in the Soviet Union. This was the S-47, the best transport plane in the world. It was built according to the license to serve both as a passenger and as a paratroop-transporting aircraft. It was used in both the military and for civilian purposes, but for the sake of convenience—right at the factories during production—it was painted a camouflage green, so that it would not have to be repainted later.

The third organization in this family—the Weapons Narkomat—does not need to be explained, while the Ammunition Narkomat was something truly original that deserves some commentary. It was original because even during the course of the war all the countries that we are used to thinking of as most aggressive did not have a separate ministry in charge of ammunition. For example, in Germany even after the beginning of World War II only

one minister was in charge of the production of weapons and ammunition, not two. The Soviet Union, in peacetime, had created a separate ministry to take care exclusively of the production of ammunition. Stalin's Ammunition Narkomat began to function immediately and fully.

Right from the start there was a problem to be solved: where to locate all the new factories that would be producing shells, gunpowder, cartridges, and so on. The issue of finding locations for the new ammunition industry entailed the issue of the character of the next war.

If Stalin had planned to carry out a sacred defensive war, if he planned to hold down his borders, the new ammunition factories should have been built behind the Volga River. There they would have been fully secure—the enemy tanks and airplanes could not reach so far inland. If Stalin was not sure of his strength, if, as we have been told, Stalin was afraid of Hitler and had reservations about the Red Army's ability to hold the borders, if there had been a belief that it might be forced to retreat—in that case the new factories should have been built not behind the Volga but even farther inland, in the Ural Mountains, where there are raw materials, a sufficient industry and energy base, and where the factories would have been completely secure. Let the enemy take huge territories, but our industrial base would remain whole—then Hitler would have a taste of what a wounded bear is like.

But neither the first nor the second option was even briefly discussed; there was no need for them. The Red Army had no plans to retreat, just as it had no plans of holding down the borders of its country. According to Stalin's plans, the Red Army had to advance forward into a war-devastated and weakened Europe. If the Red Army crossed the borders and advanced, the ammunition factories along with all the other ones (tank, artillery, etc.) would be left behind farther and farther in the rear. Let us imagine that the Red Army needs to be supplied with a small quantity of ammunition, for example 100,000 tons, or 200,000 tons. How could they be transported from the Urals to the western borders? A standard military train could carry nine hundred tons. Imagine how many trains would be needed, how many railroad cars, how many locomotives. Estimate how many workdays would be spent by all the railroad personnel, how much coal would be burned, how many train guards would be needed for how many days.

Aside from all this, it is important to remember that shells were not the only things that would have to be transported along the railroad lines. The railroads during war are crowded with troops, repair crews, hospitals, cisterns, and so on. In other words, if we prepare an attack, the transfer of hundreds of thousands of tons of ammunition and all other equipment has to be done in secret, and secrecy is best achieved by shortening the distance to be covered during the transfer. In an ideal situation, all factories would be located right at the borders. Then the trains would need to travel only a couple of hours, not days across the entire country. In that case, the demand for transportation decreases, and one train can be reused for several trips. This frees up the internal railroad lines for other military needs. So, it was decided to build the new ammunition factories closer to the borders, as close as the metal-forging bases permitted, and not behind the Volga or in the Urals. The locations chosen were Zaporozhie, Dnyepropetrovsk, Dnyeprodzerzhinsk, Kharkov, Krivoy Rog, and Leningrad.

The ammunition factories put out more and more production, while the voracious Ammunition Narkomat consumed the nation's metal resources, including copper, nickel, chromium, lead, tin, and mercury. The more nonferrous metals went to producing ammunition, the less there was left for all the other areas of industry. The question arose as to how long this could be expected to last.

There was another question: what to do with all the ammunition that was produced? All of us have had to solve math problems in school that began with something like: "Water pours from a pipe into a certain container, and simultaneously pours out through another pipe." Such problems can be found in mathematics textbooks from centuries ago as well, even in the famous math book written by Magnitsky that was used to teach children during the reign of Catherine the Second. Stalin and all the military leaders, politicians, and economists also were at some point schoolboys and solved problems that asked about the water running in through one pipe and out the other. In 1939 that was precisely the case that came about: the Red Army consumed a certain amount of ammunition for its military training, for the "wars of liberation," and for "international aid" to Mongolia and China. If the amounts of ammunition coming in and being spent were equal, there would be no problem. But if the supplies coming in were greater than the amount that was being used, then soon there would be no more room to hold all the supplies.

The holding capacity of the artillery storages was known, as was the amount of ammunition used by the army. Through a simple arithmetic calculation it would be easy to determine when there would be no more space to hold all that was produced. What could be done then? Should new storage facilities be created? That is not quite so simple. Imagine that you have been given the task to build storage facilities that are to hold one million tons of ammunition. If the humidity levels at the facility rise above the norm, the metals will be corroded and the gunpowder will become wet. What would comrade Stalin and his loyal disciple comrade Beria do to you in that case? And if the temperature rises slightly above the norm or if the air is slightly too dry The storages cannot be close together or close to cities and factories—they must be far away from everything that could be harmed by their explosion. To make it short, additional storage facilities are not a valid solution. No matter how many are built, they will become too full if more ammunition pours in than pours out—and more and more was pouring in every day.

Aside from the undertakings of the Ammunition Narkomat, 235 factories under the jurisdiction of other Narkomats were also used to produce various types of ammunition during peacetime.⁶ And on top of all this, aside from the Ammunition Narkomat (which itself was huge) the chief directorate for construction of gunpowder, shell, cartridge, and missile factories was created in January 1941. This monster united under its control twenty-three construction areas. Note that all this was geared not toward building storage facilities but toward building new factories. The new directorate put up new factories with astonishing speed and gave them over to the Ammunition Narkomat. They now had to think of how to put to use all that they produced. In April 1941, an order came from the chief artillery directorate of the Red Army to transport the output of the Ammunition Narkomat to the western state borders and lay it on the ground. Ask anyone who has fought on the front what this means.

In the border regions of the Soviet Union the Red Army lost an unthinkable amount of artillery shells that were laid out on the ground. An equally unthinkable amount of shells was lost in railroad trains. In Byelorussia alone 4,216 railroad cars full of artillery shells were left at the border stations.⁷ Why were shells kept in railroad cars? Where were they going to be taken? If defense was being prepared, the shells should have been issued to the troops. If retreat was prepared, there would have been no need to concentrate the shells in the border regions.

But this is not what is most important. The most important is the fact that at the very beginning of the war almost all industry capable of producing new ammunition was lost. "From August to November 1941, the German troops took 303 Soviet gunpowder, shell, and missile factories, which had a production capability of supplying 101 million artillery shells, 32 million mines, 24 million air bombs, [and] 3,600 tons of TNT. This constituted 85 percent of all output from the Ammunition Narkomat."⁸ In addition to all this, the mobilization reserves of the most valuable raw materials were concentrated in those factories, including lead, forged steel, and tin. All this went to Germany and was used against the Red Army. But Stalin's prewar potential was so great that he was able to rebuild his industries during the course of the war behind the Volga River and in the Urals, and produce all that later was used to defeat the German army.

When the Ammunition Narkomat was created, nobody was posing a threat to the Soviet Union. Japan had a powerful air force and navy, but its land army was relatively small, and it was engaged in a rather unpromising war in China. Japan had limited reserves of raw materials. Soviet intelligence reported to the government that Japan could possibly decide to wage a large war in order to seize raw material sources, but the Japanese were primarily interested in those regions where the mining and purification of the materials was already set up, because Japan needed those resources immediately. In other words, Japan would fight to control the southern territories, and it would not venture into Siberia, where resources were unlimited but where their mining and purification would take several years and huge expenditures.

The Soviet General Staff, the government, and Stalin himself were not very afraid of German aggression in early 1939. There was no common border with Germany back then, so Germany could not attack suddenly. The creation of the Ammunition Narkomat in January 1939 could not be a response to German war preparations. Soviet intelligence knew that at that moment German industry was operating on a peacetime regime. In June 1939 the chief of the GRU, Ivan Proskurov, reported to Stalin that Germany was unprepared for a large-scale war: if Germany invaded Poland, it would use up its air-bomb supplies within ten days. Germany had no reserves.

After the war, the book *Results of World War II* came out in Germany. Field Marshal K. Kesselring, Colonel General H. Guderian, Colonel General L. Rendulic, Lieutenant General E. Schneider, Admiral E. Godt, and others were among the authors of the book. When comparing the analysis made by Soviet intelligence and the actual events, we must acknowledge that Soviet military intelligence was mistaken. The German supply of bombs ran out not after ten days of war, but on the fourteenth day after the attack against Poland.

Apparently the best studies of the development of the German army during the reign of the Third Reich were done by Major General B. Muller-Gillebrand.⁹ The general said that in 1939 the German High Command of the land troops demanded that a reserve of ammunition be created that could last for four months of war. However, such reserves were never created. If a four-month supply is taken as 100 percent, then there was in actuality only 30 percent of pistol cartridge reserves, enough for 36 days of war; 15 percent of ammunition for mountain guns; 12 percent of mortar shells for light mortars, and 10 percent for heavy ones. The best supplies were for the heavy field howitzers—there were enough shells to last for two months of war. The worst case was with the tank shells. In September 1939 the main tank

of the German *Wehrmacht* was the Pz-II, equipped with 20-mm cannon. There was only 5 percent of the needed supply of shells required for four months of war, meaning only enough for six days of combat.¹⁰

Despite all this, Hitler was not eager to mobilize the country's industry toward war. The German army waged a war, which began as a European conflict and turned global, but German industry remained operating on a peacetime regime.

For fifty years the Soviet government has been persuading us that in 1939 war was unavoidable, the world was headed for war, and Stalin could do nothing but sign a non-aggression pact with Germany. An analysis of the conditions of German industry in general, and in the area of ammunition production in particular, allows us to assert that the situation was not at all so critical. The world was not headed for inevitable war, and a war could have been averted, if Stalin had wanted to avert it. And what is more, if in September 1939 the Red Army had intervened on the side of Poland, Stalin would not have lost anything, while Hitler could have suffered a devastating defeat simply because he did not have enough ammunition. But Stalin did not capitalize on the German weakness.

When the war began, the German situation regarding ammunition did not improve, but in May 1940 Hitler delivered a fatal blow to France. There were enough shells and missiles to carry out the attack, but if Stalin had attacked Germany in 1940, there would have been nothing left for Germany to use in fending off his attack, because her industries had still not been mobilized. After this followed the Battle of Britain, and once again the German air force was engaged in a war but German industry was not. Then Hitler invaded the Soviet Union. Here, he had tremendous luck—at the very border he was able to take huge quantities of Soviet supplies. Without these supplies he would not have been able to reach Moscow.

The seizure of Stalin's supplies was a tremendous achievement for Hitler, but he had to also think of shifting his own industry to a wartime regime. Hitler, however, was in no hurry to do this. The war in Russia was serious business, and the German army had to spend more shells than ever before. The production of ammunition did not in any way correspond to the expenditures required by the army. Major General B. Muller-Hillebrand cites entire pages of clear-cut statistics. Here are some figures randomly chosen from many thousands like them. In October 1941, the German army engaged in ferocious battles with the Red Army and used 561,000 75-mm shells, while the industry during that period produced only 75,000 of those shells. In December, 494,000 were used and 18,000 received from the factories.¹¹

This could not have lasted for very long. But Hitler was in no hurry.

In December 1941, Stalin carried out powerful attacks against the German army near Moscow. In December, Hitler declared war on the United States of America. It would seem to be the perfect time to shift industry from a peacetime to a wartime regime. But Hitler still waited. Only in January 1942 did he make the decision to gradually begin the shift of German industry to fulfill wartime needs. The difference between Stalin and Hitler was that Hitler first waged a war against the entire world, fought for over two years—and only then began to mobilize his industries. Stalin, on the other hand, acted in the exact opposite manner. Stalin tried with all his powers to delay the moment when the Soviet Union would have to enter into the war, but he began mobilizing the industries and setting them on a wartime regime back in January 1939.

During the course of World War II, the Red Army had the most powerful artillery in the world. The artillery was used correctly, meaning that it was secretly concentrated in

masses on narrow strips of territory and used in sudden, intense strikes. In the Stalingrad operation, the Don front under Lieutenant General K. K. Rokossovsky broke through defenses on a narrow strip of land—only twelve kilometers. Here, besides the tanks, twenty-four rifle regiments supported by thirty-six artillery regiments led the breakthrough. Rokossovsky concentrated 135 guns on every kilometer, and 167 weapons per kilometer in the primary locations. During the course of the war, the concentration of artillery, tanks, infantry, and aviation constantly increased. By the end of the war, the Soviet staffs began to use kilotons as units of measurement for calculating the power of artillery attacks. Soviet artillery began to speak the language of the atomic age.

In the Vistula-Oder operation, the Soviet command used 34,500 guns and mortars. They were not evenly distributed throughout the force, but rather concentrated on the strips where the breakthrough was to occur. In the strip covered by the 3rd Guards Army, the concentration reached 420 weapons per kilometer. During the course of the war, the duration of artillery softening-up constantly shrank, while artillery power grew. In the same operation, in the area covered by the 5th Shock Army, the duration of softening-up was planned to be reduced to 55 minutes.¹² It began well, but after 25 minutes it was ended. Twenty-three thousand tons of ammunition was used during the 25 minutes, and 15,200 shells of medium and large caliber were used on each kilometer of that front. Penal battalions marched through the breakthrough and did not meet any opposition. Their actions confirmed that additional softening-up was not necessary, nobody would offer any opposition. This saved thirty minutes of time (very significant in war) and thirty thousand tons of ammunition.

Even more artillery was used in the Berlin operation—over 42,000 guns and mortars. Along the breakthrough areas, huge quantities of ammunition were concentrated, as well as huge quantities of weapons. Marshal Ivan Konev broke through thirty-six kilometers of front line, and used 8,626 weapons to do it. Marshal Zhukov concentrated fewer arms—7,318 guns and mortars—but broke through thirty kilometers of front line, so he actually had higher concentrations of artillery. The main forces of the tank and air force armies were also gathered in these areas, as well as corresponding amounts of infantry.

The record was set in the area occupied by the 381st Rifle Division of the 2nd Shock Army, during the course of the East Prussian operation: 468 guns and mortars on one kilometer of front line, not counting the Katyusha salvo-fire installations. During the course of the war the Red Army used 427 million shells and artillery mines and 17 billion cartridges. Just divide this by the number of German soldiers and determine how many shells that makes per soldier. To this you can add the number of hand grenades, land mines, and air bombs. Who could resist such a mighty army?

Here we must also remember that in the war the Soviet Union used only 15 percent of the prewar potential of the Ammunition Narkomat; all the rest was lost during the early periods of the war. Hitler's surprise attack not only annihilated tens of divisions of the Red Army and destroyed the strategic reserves; he also occupied the territories where the newest ammunition factories were located. The Red Army destroyed its own factories or simply abandoned them as it retreated. Some machines were evacuated, but try to move at least one furnace for thousands of kilometers. . . . Try to transport even one thousand tons of ammunition from the border forests to the railroad stations, load them into trains, and evacuate them under enemy fire.

Hitler delivered a surprise blow to Stalin. Stalin lost almost all his ammunition factories. He had to fight back using only 15 percent of the might of the Ammunition Narkomat.¹³ The results of the war are well known. Try to imagine what could have happened if Hitler had stalled with his attack and would have, instead, himself been attacked by Stalin. In that case, Stalin would have been using not 15 percent of his ammunition, but the full 100 percent. What would the outcome of World War II have been then?

The Winter War: Finland

The Red Army will consider its Bolshevik mission complete when it achieves control of the entire globe.

—JAN GAMARNIK, CHIEF OF THE POLITICAL DIRECTORATE OF THE RED ARMY, IN A SPEECH
GIVEN AT A MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE
FOR DEFENSE OF THE USSR ON MARCH 15, 1937

In October of 1939, immediately after the division of Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union, Stalin's diplomats addressed the government of Finland, demanding the cession of the Karelian Isthmus.¹ In exchange, they offered the Finns a piece of territory twice the size of the isthmus. Upon first glance, the proposition seems alluring—Finland sacrifices 2,761 square kilometers, and receives 5,528 square kilometers in return. However, the proposition was not alluring, but rather contemptuous. The Karelian Isthmus is a direct gateway to the capital of Finland, the largest ports and most populated regions. The geographical disposition of Finland is such that any aggression could come only from the Soviet Union, and only through the Karelian Isthmus. Precisely for this reason, the Finnish army, starting in 1918 (after winning its independence fighting against Russian and local Bolshevik troops during the Russian civil war), began an extensive buildup of defenses on the Karelian Isthmus. Starting in 1929, the scope of the buildup expanded significantly. On the Karelian Isthmus emerged a solid strip of fortifications and obstructions, which became known as the Mannerheim Line, named for the country's commander-in-chief, who had won the war of independence in 1918. Finland spent practically all of her military budget for the ten years preceding the war on the creation of this line of fortifications. Military experts from all countries of the world unanimously agreed that no army, taking any amount of time, could break through the Mannerheim Line. Nevertheless, Stalin's envoys demanded from Finland the cession of her main and only defense structure, meaning they wanted the Finns to put down their arms and hand over to the Red Army, without a fight, the road to their country's unprotected internal regions—well developed and heavily populated. In exchange, they were

offering a huge piece of swampland and marshy woods, in which no one lived and which no one needed.

The “exchange” of territories was the first step in the plan. Stalin had prepared a second step as well—a revolution in Finland and takeover by the Communists. Already in October 1939 the 106th Rifle Division of the Red Army was supplemented with Finnish Communists who lived in the Soviet Union.² When necessary, this division could be declared the “national army of Finland” and used as a weapon against the legal government. Stalin had prepared a new Communist “government” as well, which was strengthened with officers from the NKVD and the military intelligence. This “government” could at any moment, in accordance with “the will of the Finnish people,” be sent to Helsinki. Stalin had started the formation of this “government” already in June 1939. He decided to appoint Division Commander A. Anttila of the Red Army to the position of “minister of defense.” Down the road, the same man became a major general in the Soviet army. In the plans, the future “minister of the interior” of Finland was an operator of the NKVD, T. Lekhen. At the head of the “government,” Stalin had put the Soviet intelligence officer Otto Kuusinen. Conveniently, Kuusinen was also appointed as “minister of foreign affairs.”

Kuusinen had already once been the member of a Communist government in Finland. In 1918, he had created the Communist party of Finland using Soviet money, and had tried to stage a coup. After his plans for a government turnover failed, he spent over a year in the country underground and conducted intensive terrorist activity against Finland in the interests of the World Revolution. After his cover was blown, he fled to the Soviet Union. In 1921 Kuusinen entered the ranks of the highest officials of the Comintern and became one of the leaders of the World Revolution. In 1937 Stalin mercilessly cleansed the Comintern, and a large majority of the leaders were executed. Kuusinen, for some particularly useful service, escaped execution and in 1941 he became a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). In 1952 he became a member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU, meaning he entered the most elite group of leaders of the Soviet Union.

Kuusinen’s wife, Aino, was an intelligence agent for the General Staff of the Red Army. From 1931 to 1933 she was in the United States illegally, and from 1934 was in Japan working with Richard Sorge. In 1938 Stalin ordered her to return to the Soviet Union and threw her in jail.³ And so, this Communist Otto Kuusinen made preparations for delivering freedom and happiness to the Finns, while his own wife roted in Stalin’s jail, and Stalin could at any moment either raise him to the highest leadership position in the USSR or place him before a firing squad.

Three months before the start of the war in Finland, in August of 1939, the Red Army in a surprise attack obliterated the Japanese Sixth Army in Mongolia. Logic would lead us to the conclusion that if the Red Army had the capacity to destroy an entire Japanese field army, Finland could not possibly present any difficulties. Stalin knew the strength of the Red Army, and was certain that Finland would accede without a fight to all his demands. For this reason he did not conduct any serious preparations for war. However, the people and the government of Finland turned out to be unwilling to bend to Stalin’s requests.

Stalin issued an order to crush Finland. For an attack, the Soviets needed a pretext. As if on demand, on November 26, 1939, seven artillery shells allegedly flew in from the Finnish

side and exploded on the Soviet side, killing three privates and one junior officer.⁴ Finland's government declared that no shell could have come from Finnish territory, because Finland had no artillery near the border. Finland furthermore declared immediate willingness to invite experts from neutral countries or to create a joint committee of Finnish and Soviet experts for further investigation of the incident. But Stalin did not need any investigation. Since Finland "attacked" the Soviet Union, the Red Army must "strike in retaliation."

On November 30, 1939, after a brief but intense artillery softening-up, the Red Army crossed the Finnish border, having as its objective taking Helsinki by December 21, 1939—Stalin's sixtieth birthday. The main strike was carried out on the Karelian Isthmus; secondary strikes were carried out along the entire Finnish-Soviet border, from the Baltic Sea to the Barents Sea. Radio Moscow declared that the Finnish people rose up against capitalists and the Red Army was heading forward to assist the uprising. Units of the Red Army occupied the small village of Terioki. Immediately, Kuusinen's "government" arrived from Moscow to this village and went to work. All the "ministers" of the new Communist Finland for some reason spoke Russian. Kuusinen's son kept the records and protocols, also in Russian. The "government" established diplomatic ties with the USSR on December 1, and on December 2 it signed an "agreement on mutual help and friendship between the Soviet Union and the Finnish Democratic Republic." The agreement was signed by comrades Molotov and Kuusinen and printed in two copies, but in only one language—Russian. Comrade Kuusinen also signed in Russian, using the Cyrillic alphabet.

However, a victory march on Helsinki did not happen. The Mannerheim Line was not located on the immediate border, but deeper in the territory behind the "security pale." This pale was a strip of land that started at the border and stretched from twenty-five to sixty-five kilometers deep into Finnish territory.⁵ The security pale was a strip of land full of traps, barricades, obstacles, and minefields. The entire space was filled with granite boulders and concrete blocks, forest blockages, scarps and counterscarps, and anti-tank trenches. In this strip for many years, on purpose, there had been no industrial or transportation buildup. Finland did not keep any large military formations or any large amounts of supplies here. All existing bridges on this strip were wired with explosives and ready to be blown up or burned, along with everything else in sight, by the Finnish border patrol in the event of retreat.

The security pale is a kind of shield used by the defending side against the aggressor. When trapped in this line, the aggressor loses speed of movement, and his troops sustain casualties even before encountering the main forces of the enemy. In this territory the defending side employs only small but very mobile units. The units burst out from under cover, carry out sudden attacks, and quickly retreat to new positions, which were prepared beforehand. These light squads try to pass themselves off as the main forces of their army. The aggressor is forced to stop, turn his troops, and spend shells on empty spaces, while these light squads of the enemy have already quickly and covertly retreated and are preparing ambushes in new positions.

Upon finding himself in the security line, the aggressor loses his most significant advantage—surprise. While the aggressor carries out an exhausting struggle against the light defense squads, the main forces of the defending side have time to achieve full readiness and meet the aggressor in convenient positions. Finland's army acted exactly in this manner. The deeper the security pale stretches, the better for the defense. There can never be too much of a good thing. While breaking through a deep security pale, the aggressor involuntarily shows

the main thrust and direction of his movements. Losing the element of surprise, the aggressor himself becomes its victim—the depth of the security pale is unknown to him, so the encounter with the main forces of the defenders occurs at a moment previously unknown to the aggressor, but well planned by the defense.

On the Karelian Isthmus and on other sections of the security pale, Finnish snipers and light mobile squads were fully active and operating to the best of their capacity. Here is a standard situation: a column of Soviet tanks, motorized infantry, and artillery is moving along a forest road. To their left and to their right there is nowhere to go—impassable woods, packed with land mines. Ahead of them is a bridge. The Soviet demolition experts check for mines and come back reporting that the way is clear. The first tanks begin to crawl onto the bridge—and together with the bridge they fly up into the air: packs of dynamite had been inserted into the supporting beams of the bridge during its construction; they are undetectable, and even if they had been discovered, any attempt to diffuse them would have triggered an explosion. Thus, the Soviet column, many kilometers in length, like a giant snake, is stopped in its path. Now, the Finnish snipers spring into action. They take their time. Bang, bang, bang, and once again the forest is silent. And again, bang, bang. The snipers strike from somewhere far away. They hit only Red Army officers and tow-truck drivers. A diversion through the forest is not an option—keep in mind that on both sides of the road lie impenetrable minefields. Any attempt by the Soviet demolition experts to approach the destroyed bridge or to defuse the mines is met by a prompt and accurate response by the Finnish snipers.

The 44th Rifle Division of the Soviet Red Army, which had been advancing four hundred kilometers north of the Karelian Isthmus, was locked in place on three parallel roads which led to three blown-up bridges. In one day of fighting, the division lost practically its entire commanding staff. The same was true in other divisions—the columns became immobile, and could not take a step back or a step forward. At night, the columns suffered brief surprise attacks from somewhere far away in the woods. At night, the Finns fired out a couple of rounds of shells at a time from their concealed positions in the bushes, hitting the defenseless ranks. Then again all became quiet, until the next round.

It is said that the Red Army did not show its best side in Finland. This is true. But let us imagine in place of the Soviets a division from any other army. What can they do in such a situation? Pull back their columns? Heavy artillery and tractors with huge howitzers in tow cannot pull back. Finnish snipers hit tractor drivers, one by one. With tremendous difficulty, inch by inch, the column manages to crawl backwards; meanwhile, behind them another bridge explodes. The column is locked in. All the paths that lead to that other bridge are also blocked by mines, and the snipers there are also taking their time and hitting, one by one, commanders, sappers who try to disarm land mines, and drivers. Far ahead is the practically impenetrable line of concrete fortifications—the Mannerheim Line. To break through this line without artillery and thousands of tons of ammunition is impossible. . . . Soviet troops reached the Finnish fortifications, but their heavy artillery was far behind, bogged down between minefields and blown-up bridges, and under fire. In total, during their retreat on the Karelian Isthmus the subdivisions of the Finnish army destroyed 143 bridges and viaducts.

As a result of these actions, it took the Red Army two weeks to pass through the security pale. After this, the divisions of the Red Army reached the main line of defense, having already suffered heavy losses, with a broken morale and without ammunition, fuel, or supplies.

Their maneuvering capability was strictly limited: any step off the main path could become the last step. The rear had lagged behind and was constantly under threat of repeated attack by the light squads of Finnish soldiers, who had flawlessly memorized the area and knew secret safe passages through all the minefields.

Having overcome the security pale, the Red Army found itself halted by the fortifications of the Mannerheim Line. The line was in fact a brilliantly camouflaged defense structure, well integrated into the surroundings, and stretching 135 km in width and up to 30 km in depth. Its right flank met the shore of the Baltic Sea; its left flank bordered Lake Ladoga. All in all, the Mannerheim Line counted 2,311 concrete, ironclad, and wooden defense structures. The fighting on the Mannerheim Line was especially tenacious. The Red Army succeeded in breaking through the Mannerheim Line only on March 12, 1940, in the process sustaining colossal casualties, in both men and arms: 126,875 soldiers and officers were either killed in action, or disappeared without a trace, or died from wounds and disease. Additionally, the army counted 188,671 wounded, 58,370 ill, and 17,867 frostbitten.⁶

On March 13, 1940, the war between Finland and the Soviet Union was ended. The war lasted 105 days and became known as the Winter War. The Soviet Union received the Karelian Isthmus, but Finland kept her independence.

The whole world was shocked by the unbelievable weakness of the Red Army. The giant Soviet Union could not take care of Finland, whose population was only slightly more than 3.5 million. All around the world, newspapers were filled with caricatures and reports of the Soviet Union's utter lack of readiness for any war, no matter how small.

A conviction arose among military men, writers, historians, and politicians that the Red Army had demonstrated in Finland complete and utter lack of capacity to wage war. For many decades this idea has been taught in military academies, schools, and universities. However, the actions of the Red Army during the Winter War do not demonstrate weakness. They exhibit tremendous strength. First of all, it is necessary to keep in mind that the Red Army acted in conditions that no army had previously faced. It was conducting an attack in an average temperature of 21 to 24 degrees Celsius below zero. Sometimes it was warmer, but frequently it was colder. On the very first night of the war, the temperature was registered at minus 39 degrees Celsius. Some nights had been even colder. Action was taking place not only on the Karelian Isthmus, but also a thousand kilometers to the north, up to the Arctic Circle and even farther. The cold there was even more severe. Not a single army in the world had conducted an offensive operation, even a failed one, under a temperature of minus 20 degrees Celsius. In such temperatures, no one had even attempted to conduct massive attacks, because it is impossible. Nevertheless, the Red Army conducted successful offensive operations in temperatures of minus 30 degrees Celsius and colder. Stalin ordered the army to act in impossible conditions, and the Red Army did the impossible.

How did the Finns defend themselves in those conditions?

Defense is a whole different story. For twenty years, practically Finland's entire military budget went to funding the creation of fortifications on the Karelian Isthmus. Beyond the infinite minefields, the anti-tank trenches and granite obstacles, the concrete tetrahedrons, and the wire obstacles that stretched in rows of ten, twenty, and thirty, there was a place marked on the map as "hill 65.5," protected by forty-seven rows of thick barbwire on metal stakes, connected to mines. In the last rows of barbwire, instead of stakes railroad tracks had been driven into the ground. Behind these rows of barricades were concrete casemates. Each

major defensive construction stored ammunition and fuel, contained warm sleeping quarters, a restroom, a kitchen, a dining room, and had running water and electricity. Communication lines, command posts, hospitals—all were below ground, under concrete, in the woods, hidden in the snow, all in warmth. The snipers who spent days waiting for their victims, and the soldiers of the light ski squads which raided the rear of the Red Army, were warmly clad and well equipped. Finnish soldiers are born, raised, and trained to act in these conditions. They know that, after several days of active patrol or ski raids, they will return to their comfortable bunkers, where a bowl of hot soup waits for them and where they can rest before their next assignment. They know that in the event that they are wounded, an operating table well below the ground awaits them, along with a clean, dry, and warm hospital bed.

But try attacking under these conditions. Try to amputate a leg when beyond the thin cloth wall of the hospital tent the temperature is minus 40, and inside it is minus 30.

In addition to the cold, there was the snow. The depth of the snow cover was up to 1.5 meters. Even if the temperature had been warmer, but the snow cover the same, conducting offensive operations would still have been impossible. Under the snow were the swamps. Deep snow acts as insulation, so the swamps do not freeze. Furthermore, chemical reactions take place in the swamps and radiate heat. As a result, even in the most severe cold, people, cars, and tanks fall under the snow and drown in the marshes. But even this is not all. There are not only swamps, but also lakes. Many of them also do not freeze, and for the same reason: where there is no snow, the water freezes to the bottom, but where there is a thick snow cover, the ice is very thin, and can perhaps support a person, but not a tank. Finland is a land of a thousand lakes, but how can you tell what is a lake and what is a field? Everything around was white, fluffy, sparkling. “The theater of operations consisted of 50 percent woodlands, 25 percent water, some swampland, and only about 10 percent of the total surface could be crossed by tanks.”⁷

On top of everything, under the snow were granite boulders. To the eye, the fields looked even under the snow. But as soon as the tanks tried to cross them, they ripped their tracks and broke their rollers. This happened even before they reached the minefields. The whole environment in Finland is one big anti-tank measure. Tanks cannot do anything here. Everywhere is either a field full of boulders, or a lake, or an impassible thicket of a forest. And all this is laced with millions of mines. A mistake can be made, but only once.

During the 105 days of the war, there were twenty-five days of flying weather. The rest of the time, blizzards or snowfall impeded flight. In December, there are very few daylight hours. Complete darkness falls at four o'clock. And farther north the day is even shorter, if there is any daytime at all. Any place where trees can grow, there is impenetrable forest. Tanks cannot do anything in the woods; artillery fire cannot be aimed in such thicket. There is no visible horizon. The observer cannot see where his shells go—he can hear them fly above his head, but he cannot see where they land. From the battery he hears yells: Too close? Too far? Who can tell? The only view of where the shells land is from the very field these shells land on. On the other hand, the Finnish artillery had always fought in these regions. Every battery had during years of peace drilled in these areas, and the aimers, observers, and commanders knew by heart the data for precision shelling.

And so, the Soviet artillery was pretty useless, the tanks were useless, for this environment is not for tanks. The air force also could not help, for it could not see anything. A tactics manual teaches: “From above, the forest resembles an even surface, and to locate troops in a

forest is a rare occurrence.” Under normal conditions, it is difficult to pick out enemy troops in a thick forest. But here, there was nothing to pick out—the Finns were under the snow, underground. In the daylight, the smoke from their stoves could be observed only where they wanted it to be seen, in decoy locations. But where is this daylight anyway?

The advancing armies could not go underground, because in December in Finland the frozen ground is little different from granite. And the wounded did not need to be dragged to the hospital, because in such extreme cold the wounded froze to death even with relatively light blood loss. In 1944 the German Colonel General L. Rendulic fought in the same regions:

In this forested and rocky zone the trees grow on disorderly piles of rock, which often reach as high as the average person, and even higher. During the first reconnaissance ventures, I sometimes attempted to stray from the path and penetrate the forest, but was rarely successful. Most often this was possible only in a crawling fashion, on all fours. . . . Movement through the rocks and between them is an extremely exhausting occupation. Only on rare occasions was it possible to go around the rocks. Any movement by car, even after the forest had been cleared, was out of the question. Even pack animals cannot pass through. . . . Movement of troops and conduction of warfare in formations, applied in the usual settings, are completely inappropriate here. The region of marshlands and swampy forests is equally covered with trees. Movement through those areas is even more difficult than through the rocky-forested area.⁸

This impenetrable region was further fortified by obstacles, and anti-infantry and anti-tank devices. Manmade obstacles were worked into the natural surroundings with great skill. Streams and small rivers crisscrossed the region and had high cliffs for shores. The shores were scarped. All bridges were blown up. All paths leading to the bridges were mined and under constant fire by the snipers. Behind all this was the main defense line, seven to twelve kilometers in depth.

But we know all this only now. Back then, the Soviet command knew none of this. Behind the main line they once again found fortifications and another security pale, and again minefields, barricades, and another fortified line.

The walls of the defense structures were concrete, one and a half to two meters thick. The above-ground walls were covered by armored plates, and all this was buried under multi-ton granite boulders and covered with soil. All was camouflaged and hidden. Above these casemates rose tall, thick pine forests, which in turn were covered with snow. Machine gunners, riflemen, and artillerymen were sitting behind the steel and concrete fortifications. Deep embrasures dimmed the flashes of fire and dulled the bangs. The Finns fired at point-blank range, while the advancing troops thought they were under long-range fire.

The Finns used cement of the brand “600” in the construction of their fortifications. For every cubic meter of concrete, they used 95 kilograms of steel armature. Here are the results: Soviet 280-mm mortar guns and 203-mm howitzers fired directly on the Finnish strongpoint named “pillbox #0031.” They used specially designed ammunition for firing on concrete. A 203-mm shell for the B-4 howitzer weighs 100 kg.⁹ The 280-mm shell for the B-5 mortar weighs 246 kg. There were 1,043 of the 203-mm shells and 116 of the 280-mm ones fired at the pillbox #0031. Only after this did the pillbox cease to resist attack. One hundred and thirty-two tons of shells for one pillbox!

Let us imagine preparations for the shelling of this pillbox. First of all, it must be located—this costs many human lives. Then one has to approach the pillbox through mine-fields and other obstacles. This also costs many human lives. Then, under constant fire from the pillbox, one must calculate and prepare positions for one's arms, and then secure them in these positions. The 203-mm howitzer weighs 17.7 tons in battle-ready position, and 19 tons in travel-ready position. The 280-mm mortar gun weighs 18.4 tons and 19.7 tons, respectively. They must be taken apart and towed by tractors on the small country roads and roadless terrain, since the pillbox is never located on a major road. During the transportation, the assembly process, and the positioning, these giants are extremely vulnerable. Then it is necessary to bring in the shells. The net weight of the ammunition used to shell one pillbox #0031 was 132,836 kilograms. But the shells are stored in secure wooden crates, which create additional weight. Boxes weighing 200 to 300 kg must be loaded onto trucks and brought to the firing positions on narrow dirt roads. Here, they must be unloaded. And this is only the shells. There are also the charges. Several tens of kilograms of gunpowder are needed in order to push a shell of such mass from the barrel. In a weapon of such caliber the charges are separate, and instead of cartridges one must use powder bags—silk sacks full of gunpowder that catch flame when used. Several tens of tons of gunpowder in silk bags constitute a very capricious and extremely dangerous cargo. Transportation and storage of this cargo is a very delicate, labor-intensive, and risky occupation.

If during the shelling of the pillbox #0031 the 203-mm howitzer fired one shot every two minutes,¹⁰ then for 1,043 shots they needed 2,086 minutes, or almost thirty-five hours. But firing constantly without breaks is impossible. One can only shoot during daylight, or it is impossible to correctly direct the fire. But perhaps the pillbox #0031 was under fire from an entire battery, not just a lonely howitzer? These weapons are so huge and cumbersome that one battery only has two of them. One battalion has three batteries—six howitzers. If the shelling comes indeed from a battery or from an entire artillery battalion the time needed to take down the pillbox diminishes. But then other difficulties appear: it is one thing to set up one howitzer in a good firing position, a whole different story if one needs to set up two, or six. Plus, the 280-mm mortar guns are nearby and firing away. It becomes very simple for the enemy to detect the firing positions of these giant weapons. These monsters, when in firing position, are extremely vulnerable to all fire.

Furthermore, the barrel of the 203-mm howitzer weighs five tons. At the moment it fires, a giant shell instantly accelerates to a speed of 607 meters per second. The barrel undergoes tremendous heat and dynamic stress. It can quickly overheat, to the point that all firing needs to be stopped. Additionally, the barrel wears out quickly and often needs to be replaced. All this is involved in shelling just one pill-box #0031.

The shelling of Finnish pillboxes was not always as successful as the case described here. Against the pillbox #0011, the Soviets unleashed 1,322 shells from 203-mm howitzers and 280-mm mortars—almost two hundred tons. The pillbox was partially damaged, but even after this it continued to resist. Sometimes, at the cost of much blood, Soviet combat engineers crawling under crossfire made their way to the Finnish pillboxes and attempted to blow them up. They discovered that a charge carrying 5,500 kg of explosives was not sufficient for blowing up a pillbox.¹¹

From April 14 to April 17, 1940, in Stalin's presence, the Kremlin assembled a council of the supreme command staff to discuss the events of the Winter War and share opinions. It

was decided that the 203-mm howitzer did not have enough power to destroy such constructions as the pillboxes. To solve this kind of problem a 305-mm howitzer was needed.¹² For the record: the 1939 model of the Soviet 305-mm howitzer B-18 weighed 45.7 tons, and a shell for it weighed 330 kg. The initial speed of the shell was 530 m/s. The maximum distance the shells could be fired was 16.6 km. Only such “monster-weapons” were suited for the destruction of the Finnish defenses.

The military experts of the West should have recognized the amazing warfare capabilities of the Red Army and the fallacy of their assumptions. From the actions in Finland, there could be only one logical conclusion: nothing is impossible for the Red Army. If it was capable of advancing in such conditions, then it was capable of advancing in any other conditions—there could be no worse conditions than those in Finland in the winter. If the Red Army had broken through the Mannerheim Line, then it was ready to crush Europe and whoever got in the way. In Finland the Red Army proved that it could accomplish any task, even an “impossible” one. The victorious Red Army accomplished what the strategists of the West had deemed unfeasible. But the strategists did not accept the fallacy of their predictions. Instead they declared the Red Army to be unfit and unprepared for war.

However, all who had followed the developments of the Winter War did not pay attention to certain inconsistencies. The first strange thing happened on March 12, 1940, after the Red Army broke through the Mannerheim Line. After this, a completely defenseless Finland spread out before it. Finland could now be taken by bare hands, like a turtle whose shell has been ruptured. But the Red Army, having broken through the impenetrable defense system of the Finns, stopped its advance. Why? In December 1939, already having premonitions of the strength of the Mannerheim Line, the Red Army should have stopped its advance and not gone to storm it. But if the Red Army did storm the line and, at the cost of unimaginable casualties, managed to break through it, it should have used what it gained. Stalin broke into the safe, but then did not take anything from it. Where was Stalin’s logic?

The second inconsistency: all leading military experts before the Winter War declared that breaking through the Mannerheim Line could not be done by any army. The Red Army did the impossible. Furthermore, it broke through the line impromptu, for it had not prepared for such limiting conditions. The Red Army broke through the line in only three months, when all the military experts of the West had maintained that it could not be done in any time frame. And now, all of a sudden these same experts began talking of the Red Army being completely unfit for war.

The third inconsistency: the first and loudest reports of the Red Army’s poor performance in Finland came in newspapers funded by Stalin. Stalin’s court poet, Alexander Tvardovsky, suddenly began speaking of the “infamous war.” For some reason he was not executed. For some reason, he was awarded Stalin’s praises. Stalin was wise enough to end his “liberation crusade” after the Mannerheim Line was broken and Finland was deprived of her security barrier.

Military operations in Finland were ended on March 13, 1940, and only three months later the three Baltic states, Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia, surrendered to Stalin without a fight and became republics of the Soviet Union. The governments and military leadership of these countries had carefully watched the war in Finland and drew from their observations a frightening, but correct conclusion: the Red Army was capable of carrying out impossible orders, and it would not be stopped by any number of casualties. If Stalin commanded the

Red Army to annihilate somebody, it would sustain whatever losses it took to accomplish the order. Therefore, the three states surrendered without firing a single shot. They understood that resistance was futile. Meanwhile, Stalin issued an ultimatum to the leadership of Romania: give up Bessarabia. Remembering the experience of Finland, the Romanian government did not even organize lengthy talks: it handed over Bessarabia, and on top of it Northern Bukovina.

The Red Army conducted in Finland a unique and unparalleled operation. The Red Army performed in a fashion unrivaled and unrepeatable by any army in history, but for some reason Hitler concluded that it had performed poorly. German generals were watching wonders unfold before their eyes, but did not understand the significance of what they were seeing. German generals were unable to appreciate what they observed. Thus, the people surrounding and counseling Hitler made strange deductions concerning Stalin's readiness for war. Goebbels's diary from those days is full of remarks of this sort: "November 11, 1939: The Russian army presents no value. The army is poorly commanded, and it is even more poorly armed. . . . December 4, 1939: The Russian Army is of little value. . . . January 23, 1940: The military strength of Moscow is almost insignificant."¹³ Goebbels wrote down not only his own opinion, but also Hitler's: "He once again notes the catastrophic state of the Russian army. It can hardly be used for military action."¹⁴

For the Red Army, the war in Finland was a vaccine against hubris, boastful dispositions, and underestimating the enemy. The war in Finland taught the Red Army a lot: in 1941 near Moscow and in 1942 near Stalingrad, German troops met the Red Army, which by then knew how to fight in the winter. The German army, however, was not at all taught by the war in Finland. This war played a dirty trick on Hitler. He did not understand this war, did not correctly assess its hardships, and therefore made disastrous miscalculations. He suddenly decided that the Red Army was not ready for war and was unfit for any kind of action. Hitler turned out to be wrong. No conclusion about the strength of the Soviets follows out of the fact that the Red Army did not reach Helsinki. On the contrary, it follows that the Red Army was capable of reaching Berlin.

Many German generals realized that the Red Army, according to the results of the fighting in Finland, was assessed incorrectly. During the Battle of Stalingrad, Goering had publicly declared that the war the Soviet Union had launched against Finland was "perhaps one of the biggest cover-ups in world history." Goering believed that Stalin deliberately "sent to Finland a few divisions, equipped with obsolete weaponry, in order to hide the creation by the Soviet Union of an unprecedented war machine."¹⁵ In closed circles, Hitler himself admitted the mistake. This occurred on April 12, 1942. Hitler said the following: "The entire war with Finland in 1940, just as the Russian advance into Poland with obsolete tanks and weapons and poorly clothed soldiers, was nothing other than a grandiose disinformation campaign, because Russia at that time controlled arms which made it, in comparison with Germany and Japan, a world power." He also said, on June 22, 1942: "Back home in Russia, they created an extremely powerful military industry . . . and the more we find out what goes on in Russia, the more we rejoice that we delivered the decisive blow in time. The Red Army's weaponry is the best proof that they succeeded in reaching extremely high achievements."¹⁶

23

Germany's Strategic Resources and Stalin's Plans

The Fuehrer noted that the objective of gaining control of the Finnish Gulf is paramount, because free navigation in the Baltic Sea and direct delivery of ore from Lulea becomes possible immediately after the liquidation of the Russian fleet. Taking over Russian ports from the mainland will require three to four weeks. Only then can the enemy's submarines be paralyzed. Four weeks of fighting means 2 million tons of iron ore.

—COLONEL GENERAL F. HALDER, *WAR DIARY*

War is gluttonous, that is why every strategist constructs maps of supply routes that enable key raw materials to reach his country and the country of his opponent. His goals are to defend his supply lines and cut those of the opponent. If one draws a map of supply sources and supply routes, it becomes clear that Germany's position in 1939 was particularly difficult. After 1939 the position did not improve; it actually worsened. On the grand scale, Germany has no raw materials. Germany is tied by thousands of fragile strings to the rest of the world. Taking over Czechoslovakia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, France, Yugoslavia, and Greece, and conducting the *Anschluss* of Austria and Germany did not solve Germany's supply problem. Gaining control over millions of people and huge territories that did not contain raw materials only led Germany to spread herself thin, and did not bring any advantages.

Here is another aspect of the problem: Germany, France, Belgium—all have powerful steel-casting industries, but they do not have much iron ore. Too many things on the front and in the rear, from the soles of soldiers' boots to battleships, are made of steel. Due to steel shortages, German leaders—as high-ranking as Goering—seriously considered the possibility of building locomotives of concrete instead of steel.¹ Due to steel shortages, damaged bridges were repaired using wooden logs instead of steel beams. Due to steel shortages, railroad rails from spare tracks were used to repair the damaged sectors of primary tracks. Railroad tracks with two-way traffic were transformed into one-track roads. This slowed the entire rhythm of production in Germany and in the countries Germany occupied.

In any case, Hitler could not have counted on a quick victory—he had too many enemies. A long war was a path to suicide for Hitler, in the most literal sense of the word. In order to maintain for just a few years what he wanted to establish, he needed to gain iron ore supply. The richest ore mines in Europe, with high iron readings of up to 60 to 65 percent, were located in the area of Kiruna-Ellivare in the very north of Sweden, and arrived at German ports through the Baltic Sea.²

One of the weakest links of the German economy was the loading of iron ore in the Swedish port of Lulea, followed by the long trip along Finland's coast through the Gulf of Bothnia, past the Åland Islands, past the islands Gotland, Oland, Bornholm, and then the unloading in the German ports. The iron ore was loaded almost at the Arctic Circle and was transported across the entire Baltic Sea from the northernmost to the southernmost ports. Neither the British, nor the French, nor any other fleets posed any threat to the transport of iron ore across the Baltic. For a foreign fleet, breaking into the Baltic Sea was like breaking into a mousetrap and staying trapped there. But the Soviet Navy did not need to break into anything. It was already there, in its bases, peacefully awaiting the right opportunity.

For defending the Soviet Union a fleet in the Baltic Sea is not needed at all. Prior to 1940, the Soviet Union held a very small piece of seashore there. For more than two hundred years St. Petersburg (known as Leningrad in the Soviet era) was the capital of the empire, and for that reason along this stretch of shoreline all the Russian tsars, beginning with Peter the Great, had erected fortifications. The entire shoreline was transformed into a chain of sea fortresses, fortified regions, and coastal artillery batteries.

A coastal battery is something more impressive than a field artillery battery. A coastal battery can be compared to the artillery turret of battleships and cruisers. Under these turrets there are labyrinths of concrete casemates. A battleship turret weighs several hundred tons, sometimes even several thousand. Unlike the one on the ship, the same gun turret mounted on land can be defended by armored plates of any weight. Under the turret it is possible to erect casemates from fortified concrete with walls of any thickness. And it must be said that the Russian tsars put down enough concrete and steel in St. Petersburg's surroundings, and the Bolsheviks added even more.

The coastline defenses of the Soviet Union's Baltic fleet on June 21, 1941, had 124 coastal batteries armed with 253 weapons from 100 to 406 mm in caliber and 60 weapons that were 45 and 76 mm in caliber.³

The statistics of the coastline defense weapons are impressive. For example, a 305-mm cannon could launch shells weighing 470 kg to a distance of 43.9 km. One of the turrets had the capacity to fire six rounds a minute, almost three tons of metal. A 406-mm weapon launched a shell weighing 1,108 kg to a distance of 45.5 km. This weapon was capable of firing the next round only twenty-four seconds after the preceding one.⁴

Aside from coastline batteries and forts, the Leningrad region had a rather impressive concentration of naval cannons on railroad platforms. These long-range weapons were parked in concrete hideaways. There is a web of railroads around Leningrad, so the long-range weapons on railroad platforms could be maneuvered quickly and fired from prearranged and well-concealed firing positions, and then quickly moved away. The most important weapon of railroad artillery was the 180-mm cannon with shells of 97.5 kg. It could fire five rounds a minute, and its range was 37.8 km. There were also even more powerful cannons: the 203-, 254-, and 356-mm. The 356-mm cannons on railroad transports shot shells weighing 747.8 kg and had a firing range of 44.6 km.

Three naval fortified regions protected the direct gateways to Leningrad: the Kronstadt, Izhorsk, and Luzhsk, so the routes to the city could be shelled by powerful crossfire from all directions. Each battery, each fort, each fortified region, and each naval base had ammunition and supplies enough to last them for the entire four years of the war. No one would have the idea of launching an amphibious assault here or storming the city. Besides, Leningrad had ninety-one anti-aircraft batteries with a total of 352 anti-aircraft cannons. Why on earth would the Baltic region need a fleet on top of all this?

If the Soviet Union meant to defend itself, it did not need battleships in the Baltic Sea. In case of need, even without battleships, it was possible to quickly unload barges full of mines at the mouth of the Gulf of Finland and thus to cut off the approach to Leningrad. In defensive warfare a Soviet Baltic fleet was unnecessary. In fact, that is what happened—the Soviet Baltic fleet stayed without action for the entire duration of the war. In the event of attack by an aggressor, the Soviet Baltic fleet was extremely vulnerable. The aggressor could simply block the Soviet fleet by laying a couple of hundred mines on the shallow accesses to the naval bases. Indeed, that was done by the German fleet in June 1941. In a defensive war, ships, especially large ones, are forced to sideswipe in a shallow and narrow gulf, trapped in a blind alley.

In 1939 Hitler launched World War II against the rest of the world, having in his possession only fifty-seven submarines. His opponents were the almighty British and French fleets and, potentially, the U.S. navy. Hitler's navy had to lead an uneven battle in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. In the Baltic, Hitler had almost nothing left. In the summer of 1941 in the Baltic Sea, the German navy had only five training submarines and twenty-eight torpedo motorboats, some of which were also used for training. The rest were secondary forces: mine blockers, various motorboats, and minesweepers.⁵ But peace-loving comrade Stalin watched the struggle between Germany, France, and Britain and beefed up the might of his Baltic fleet. What for?

In 1933 Stalin had already said: "The Baltic Sea is a sealed bottle, and we can't open it."⁶ Nevertheless, out of every three battleships, Stalin kept two in the Baltic, as if in a corked bottle. In 1941 on the Baltic Sea alone Stalin had sixty-nine submarines.⁷ No one in the world had such a number of submarines collected in one place. What task could Stalin set before his battleships and submarines in the closed aquarium of the Baltic Sea? Only one: to sink German transports of iron ore. There was no other work there for them.

Aside from submarines and battleships, Stalin had two cruisers, twenty-one destroyers, forty-eight torpedo motorboats, and other forces. On the Baltic Sea, the German navy did not even have its own air force.⁸ The Soviet Baltic fleet had 656 war planes, mostly bombers and torpedo carriers.⁹ Once again we ask: what was this all for? Why such a huge quantity of torpedo carriers and bombers, if Hitler had no large ships in the Baltic? The answer is always the same: the targets were not his warships, but his transports of ore. At any moment, the Soviet fleet could have raised anchor, reached the German and Swedish ports, blocked them with thousands of mines, and sunk the defenseless transports. This would have ended the war for Germany, and this must have been known and understood in Berlin from the start. Hitler fought against Britain and France, while behind his back Stalin held up high a glittering ax.

At the end of November 1939, Stalin made a huge mistake—he launched a war against Finland. The victory in Finland was a second warning to Hitler that Stalin was approaching the Swedish sources of ore. The Red Army, acting on Stalin's orders, got through the Finnish

fortifications and halted its advance. Finland without the fortifications was defenseless. At any moment, Stalin could have given another order and renewed the advance of the Red Army. From Finnish territory it could have bombed Swedish ore mines and railroads unhindered. No one could have impeded this. The seizure of the Åland Islands alone would have been enough to close off the mouth of the Gulf of Bothnia, which would have meant an end to World War II with a Soviet victory.

And that was not all. In the part of Europe that was occupied by Hitler there are no forests. The forests are in Finland and Sweden. Any possible cessation of the shipment of lumber across the Baltic Sea carried with it a multitude of consequences, and all were negative. The wood was needed for building and restoring railroad ties and for mining coal, which was needed for forging steel. No wood meant no transport along the railroads. During peacetime in Germany there was already a yearly timber shortage of about 6 million tons. Instead of wood pulp they had to use potato foliage. The Fuehrer himself attests to that.¹⁰

But that was just during peacetime, when no one hindered the transport of timber across the Baltic Sea. As soon as Stalin's submarines struck German timber carriers, Germany would have wound up without wood at all. Potato stalks would not have sufficed to make up the shortage, because they cannot replace good wood in all its uses. It is possible to make poor quality paper out of them, but impossible to make railroad ties, impossible to timber coal mines.

On top of everything else, Germany had no nickel. It was impossible to fight without nickel—but the nickel supplies were in Finland. At the beginning of 1940, during the course of the war against Finland, the Red Army had seized control of the nickel mines in Petsamo, and then in the spring of 1940, according to the peace treaty, returned them. But now nickel was obtained according to joint Soviet-Finnish shareholding companies with the participation of Soviet engineers and workers. The Soviet government insisted that the director of the entire operation be a Soviet man. Nickel from Petsamo went to both Germany and the Soviet Union. Germany was receiving 70,000 tons from this area, or 70 percent of Germany's annual demand of this strategic mineral.¹¹ However, the nickel supply could be stopped at any moment. The Soviet 104th Rifle Division, under Major General Morozov (of the 42nd Rifle Corps of the 14th Army) stood right outside the nickel mines.

German strategists did not fear a new Soviet invasion of Finland in vain. On November 25, 1940, the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, Marshal of the Soviet Union S. K. Timoshenko, and Chief of General Staff of the Red Army General K. A. Meretskov signed a directive to the staff of the Leningrad military district. Only one copy of the document was produced, and it was labeled top secret and especially important. Let's remember the date—November 25, 1940—we will return to it later on.

The document begins by saying:

In the conditions of war only against Finland, the USSR establishes, for convenience of control and material supply, two fronts: the Northern front for action on the shoreline of the Barents Sea and in the direction of Rovaniemi, Kemi and Oulu; the Northwestern front for actions directed toward Kuopio, Mikkeli and Helsinki. The leadership of the Northwestern front falls on the shoulders of the command and staff of the Leningrad military district. It is ordered to start the development of plans for operations opening up the Northwestern front. . . . The main objectives of the

Northwestern front are set: destruction of Finland's armed forces, gaining control of her territories within the boundaries, and gaining access to the Gulf of Bothnia by the forty-fifth day of the operation. . . . On the right, the Northern front (its staff in Kandalaksha) on the fortieth day of mobilization moves to assault, and on the thirtieth day of the operation gains control of the regions of Kemi and Oulu. . . . The Red-Flag Baltic fleet, subordinate in all operations to the Military Council of the Northwestern front, is issued the following tasks: Working jointly with the air force, destroy the active navy of Finland and Sweden (in case of involvement by the latter). Assist the ground forces, acting on the Finland Gulf shore and from the Hanko peninsula, by supplying their flanks and destroying the coastal defenses of the Finns. Provide the transfer of two rifle divisions during the first few days of the war from the northern shore of the Estonian SSR to the Hanko peninsula, as well as transporting and launching an amphibious assault on the Åland Islands. Through cruiser operations of submarines and air forces, interrupt Finnish-Swedish naval communications (in the event of the latter's interference against the USSR) in the Gulf of Bothnia and the Baltic Sea.

This plan of action was given the name "S.3-20." The plan was to be put into action at the moment of receipt of a coded telegram with the signature of the chief of the general staff and the following contents: "Commence execution of plan 'S.3-20'."¹²

In this plan there was no mention of the fact that the Soviet Union would fight for the "guarantee of safety to the city of Lenin," that is, Leningrad. And there were no hints that military actions must be initiated only in response to enemy aggression. The usual words "if the enemy wages war upon us . . ." were absent. Here, it was much simpler: at any moment, the Leningrad staff would receive a telegram from Moscow, and Soviet armies would advance to the Gulf of Bothnia, to the Swedish border, to the Åland Islands! The trusted comrades at the right moment would set up a new "provocation of the Finnish war machine on our frontier," and those whose job it was to do so would explain to the workers of the world the meaning of the "peace-loving global politics of the USSR" and the necessity of our "counterblows to the Finnish aggressors."

The plan "S.3-20" could have been a stand-alone one, but it could also have been part of a much broader scheme. The plan "S.3-20" allowed the armies of the Leningrad and Arkhangelsk districts, together with the Baltic fleet, to deliver blows to Finland before the Red Army hit Germany, simultaneously, or slightly later. But in any case, the blow to Finland was also a blow to Germany. In the event of putting plan "S.3-20" into action, Soviet troops were to seize the nickel mines in Petsamo and the Åland Islands, and make their way to the city of Kemi. It was not a coincidence that in 1940, on the Baltic Sea, the first marine infantry brigade was formed under the leadership of the Soviet saboteur Colonel Parafilo. It remained only to send to the Leningrad headquarters the coded message: "Bring plan into execution." There is no need to search for a plan for war against Germany. If plan "S.3-20" had been realized, it meant a deadly blow not only to Finland, but to Germany as well.

In the summer of 1940, Stalin committed another error: he brought Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into the Soviet Union, organized on their territory the Baltic special military district, and concentrated all the forces of that region on the border of Eastern Prussia. This was completely unnecessary, and even harmful, for defense. Some say that Stalin moved his border to the West and thus strengthened the safety of the USSR. But in fact the situation

was exactly the opposite. Before the occupation of the Baltic states, the Red Army had a divisive barrier in this region. Consequently, in the event of aggression Hitler's armies had to crush the armed forces of three independent states before meeting the Red Army. Even if he had to spend only a few days in order to crush the armies of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, a surprise attack on Soviet airbases in this direction would have been out of the question. The Red Army would have had the chance to put its forces on high alert and take its positions. After the destruction of the three states' armies Hitler's forces would have approached Lake Chudskoe, which is impossible to cross. If they had tried to go around the lake, Hitler's armies would have come straight into Soviet fortified areas.

But everything unfolded according to a different scenario. The Red Army came out of its fortified areas to the front lines in Lithuania, right up to the German border, and transferred there its air bases, staff headquarters, communication centers, and strategic supply resources. For the people of the three Baltic states, Stalin's army became the aggressor and occupant, and Germany, if it decided to attack the USSR, would have become the liberator.

On June 22, 1941, the Red Army suffered a surprise attack from the German armies along the entire stretch of the border, including the Baltic states. The command centers were disrupted and Soviet aviation suffered significant losses on border air bases. Moreover, a widespread popular uprising in the Baltic states flared up against the Red Army. The Soviet "liberators" were shot at from every rooftop. The Red Army was left in the Baltic region without any fortified regions, and behind their backs, on Russian territory, remained empty fortified areas without any troops. German troops led by General Field Marshal von Manstein seized them immediately.

Skeptics disagree: if Stalin had not occupied the Baltic states, Hitler could have seized them without war, by simply moving his troops there as he did in Czechoslovakia. To this theory, there is a rebuttal. It should have been explained to Hitler clearly that if German troops attempted to enter the Baltic states area, the Soviet Union, without warning, would begin sinking German transports of ore and wood in the Baltic Sea, setting up mines in the entryways of German ports, and bombing Berlin. The Soviet Union would form international brigades and launch them into the Baltic states' territory together with millions of Soviet volunteers. And when Hitler's forces grew weak in the war with the USSR, Britain and France would use the opportunity and strangle Germany according to their best interests, eliminating it as a dangerous adversary and once again imposing retributions.

Such a declaration would have been correctly understood around the world. In such an event the people of the Baltic states would not have been enemies of the Soviets, but their allies. In such an event, the "forest brothers" (the Baltic states' partisans) would have been shooting the backs of German soldiers, not the Soviets. In such an event, international brigades would have been fighting on the side of the Baltic states. There were always enough volunteers to be found around the world.

In August 1939 the Soviet Union's position was announced loud and clear: Mongolian territory will be defended from Japanese aggression as if it was our own. And that was done! This position was correctly understood in the entire world, including Japan. As a result of this decisiveness and strictness, Japanese aggression against the Soviet Union was averted. Why did the Soviet Union, in 1939, not take the same position regarding the Baltic states?

The occupation of those states by the Red Army made sense only if there were plans for an aggressive war against Germany. The Red Army came right up to the German border and

transferred its air bases to the very front edge of that border. From the bases in Lithuania it could support the advance of Soviet troops right up to Berlin. Additionally, the Soviet navy received naval bases in Tallinn, Riga, and Liepāja. The primary forces of the navy and reserves were immediately transferred there. From Liepāja to the routes taken by caravans carrying ore, nickel, and wood to Germany, there was a very small distance. A strike from this area could be sudden and crippling.

For Hitler, this would have been the curtain call. Hitler understood that at any moment the Soviet fleet could cut the only tie binding the faraway Swedish ports with the metal-forging bases in Germany.

The Carving Up of Romania, and its Consequences

Had we not succeeded in halting Russian troops during their entrance into Romania and forcing them to be content with obtaining only Bessarabia, they would have taken the Romanian oil fields, and no later than that same spring they would have crushed us, for we would have lost all sources of fuel.

—ADOLF HITLER, MAY 18, 1942

Stalin strove to persuade Hitler that he wanted peace. At the same time, Stalin very persistently crawled toward the vital life-sustaining resources of Germany. For Stalin, it was not enough that the Red Army and fleet had under their control all the routes through which Germany got her iron ore, timber, and nickel. Stalin decided to move his divisions right up to the regions from which Germany received its petroleum supplies.

In August 1939, Stalin (with Molotov's hand) signed a pact, according to which Hitler got a war on two fronts, and according to which the British fleet blocked Germany and did not allow petroleum shipments to come in by sea. Germany had only one possible source of oil significant enough to be noted—Ploiești in Romania. The loss of this source of oil would have put a complete stop to German production, army, aviation, and navy. On June 9, 1940, the People's Commissar for Defense, Marshal of the Soviet Union S. K. Timoshenko, signed a directive about the creation of the southern front. General G. K. Zhukov was nominated to command that front. The front consisted of the 5th, 9th, and 12th armies. Overall, the southern front consisted of thirteen corps: ten rifle corps and three mounted corps. Together there were forty divisions: thirty-two rifle divisions, two motorized rifle divisions, and six mounted divisions. There were fourteen separate brigades: eleven tank brigades and three paratroop brigades. Reinforcements consisted of sixteen heavy artillery regiments and four artillery battalions of high power. The Southern front's aviation consisted of twenty-one fighter and twenty-four bomber regiments. The total number of troops was 460,000 soldiers and officers, using twelve thousand guns, three thousand tanks, and two thousand planes.

Having concentrated such might on the Romanian border, Stalin ordered Zhukov to use threats or battle to obtain Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina from Romania, and to

secure arm's-length access to Romania's undefended oil fields, which were two hundred kilometers from the border.

Zhukov's Southern front was ready to crush Romania, but in the summer of 1940 he did not have to fight. Romania's leaders had witnessed the brilliant victories sustained by the Red Army in Finland and had a clear understanding that it was better to accede to Stalin's wishes without battle. The sides agreed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. At the end of June 1940 Romanian troops retreated from and Soviet troops entered Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. These territories were added to the constituency of the Soviet Union.

In June 1940 three paths were open before the Southern front commanded by General Zhukov: two were correct, one was deadly. The first correct path: deliver a blow to Bessarabia and continue to advance toward the oil fields of Ploiești. Three thousand Soviet tanks and two thousand airplanes were more than enough to reach the oil fields and ignite a fire. This would have meant the end for Germany. If the Southern front in June 1940 had dealt a blow to Romania, World War II would have ended in 1940 with a victory by the Soviet Union and an establishment of Communist regimes over the entire European continent. If the events had unfolded in such a manner, giant colonies of the French, Belgian, and Dutch empires would have been transferred to Stalin's control.

The second path was more risky, but promised even more victories: in June 1940 Stalin could have simply done nothing. He could have waited. He would not have had to wait much longer. After defeating France, Hitler could have delivered a blow to Britain. The risk for Stalin lay only in the fact that after the defeat of France, Britain and Germany could have concluded peace. In that case, Stalin would have been left one-on-one against Germany. However, if Hitler, as he planned, landed his troops in Britain, the task of "liberating" Europe became much simpler: Zhukov would have struck the Romanian oil fields, then the Red Army would have begun its "liberating operations" in Europe, all while the best German troops were off the continent, in Britain, from where they could return immediately.

The third path was deadly. In June 1940 Zhukov's Southern front took over Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina—then halted halfway to the oilfields of Ploiești.

Hitler said in 1942 that he was able to force Stalin to be satisfied in 1940 with Bessarabia alone. This was not so. Firstly, in the summer of 1940 Stalin had not yet set for Zhukov the objective of crushing Romania. Secondly, in 1940, in the heat of the fighting in France, Hitler had no means of exerting influence over Stalin. If Stalin had ordered his troops to crush Romania in the summer of 1940, nobody would have been capable of stopping the advance of Zhukov's Southern front.

As a result of the "liberation crusades" the distance from the new Soviet frontier to the oil fields of Ploiești was now just 180 km. This was a clear, open area. Troops from the Odessa military district were concentrated at the very border, ready as soon as they got the first order to continue the "liberation" right up to the oil wells. Soviet tanks numbered over three thousand; the Romanians had sixty tanks. The Soviet "obsolete" BT-7M tank even officially had a speed of 86 km/h (in reality it was faster). The Romanian tanks opposing it were FT-17s, and had a maximum speed of 9 km/h. Therefore, the Soviet tanks could just disregard their Romanian opponents, ignore them and bypass them at their will. Even if one were to set one thousand Soviet tanks against sixty Romanian ones, even then the remaining two thousand could advance to Ploiești unhindered, without leaving the main road and without maneuvers. Even if they were to advance at only 25 km/h, they would have needed only seven to eight

hours—one night! Moreover, Stalin did not just have simple tanks, but fast-moving ones, made especially for such advances. The area ahead of them was even and flat, the ground was hard, and the roads were in good condition. The BT tanks could easily reach a speed of 40 to 50 km/h here, and without their tracks that would rise to 70 to 80 km/h. That would have come to only three hours of plain driving time. And it was not at all necessary for all the tanks to reach the oil wells. If only ten tanks had reached them that would have sufficed. Oil fields can be ignited with incendiary shells, or even with a simple soldier's lighter. Without oil, one cannot fight. Oil is not only fuel; it is also a raw resource for the chemical industry, without which one cannot get by. If only one Soviet tank company of ten tanks had wound up in the Ploiești vicinity, and if each driver had had a box of matches, the war in Europe would have ended with the early defeat of the Third Reich.

A seizure of Ploiești by Soviet troops, or just a fire in the oil production areas, would have meant paralysis for Germany. In the event of Ploiești falling to the Soviets, all German tanks, automobiles, cruisers, battleships, submarines, and airplanes would have been stopped in their tracks. Who cares that you have talented generals, officers, soldiers, pilots, and artillerymen? Without fuel all their talents would be completely useless. A freeze on oil supply to the German war machine opened up the way for thousands of other Soviet tanks. From Brest and Lvov, from Belostok and Grodno, the road to Berlin was now very short. If the German army and aviation were paralyzed, and no one offered resistance, then on good roads the tank units could reach not only Berlin and Munich, but Paris and Marseille as well.

In May and June of 1940 Hitler was crushing the armies of Britain, Belgium, Holland, and France. German tank units headed for the Atlantic Ocean, making a huge detour around Paris. Practically the entire Germany army fought in the West. Hitler victoriously crushed France and British troops on the continent. Against France and Britain, Hitler threw his entire naval fleet, air force, all his tanks, and all his heavy artillery. The best German generals fought there. And in the rear, on the borders of the Soviet Union, Hitler left only ten weak infantry divisions. Here, there was not a single tank, a single airplane, a single heavy artillery weapon. Most importantly, the ten infantry divisions were all in Poland and Slovakia. In Romania, there were no German troops.

In June 1940 neither Hitler nor his generals had any intentions or plans to attack the Soviet Union. The *Oberkommando des Heeres* (OKH—German Army High Command) and the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (OKW—Supreme Command of the Armed Forces) had neither rough drafts nor preliminary designs for a war against the USSR. They had no orders from Hitler in this regard. Not a word was said about war against the USSR.

After the defeat of France, Hitler ordered a drastic reduction in German armed forces. This reduction was widespread and intense, for there were no plans, hints, or foresight indicating that a war against the Soviet Union might be approaching. And all at once came the Soviet strike against Romania. Oil is the blood of war. Without oil, fighting becomes impossible. Stalin's axe was raised over the oil production in Romania.

In Berlin, it was finally recognized that the Soviet threat to Germany was lethal. Soviet tanks advanced to Romania, causing chaos in German headquarters: if the tanks did not stop, if they advanced another 180 km, then Germany would capitulate within the next few months. Romanian troops made no resistance and put up no obstacles to the Soviet advance. There were no German troops in Romania. It was impossible to quickly transfer troops from France. Even if it had been possible, a large number of German troops in Romania could

not have received adequate supplies. Even if it had been possible to provide supplies, then Germany would have been forced to have fewer troops in Poland, meaning an even more direct road to Berlin would have been laid open to Stalin's tanks.

Soviet troops occupied Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina and stopped. Berlin breathed a sigh of relief. However, what would have happened if, the next day, Stalin had ordered the advance to continue? A solution was found: in case of an emergency, it would be necessary to deliver a warning blow to the Soviet Union, using ten divisions in another location, thereby creating for the Red Army a diversion from Romania. After conducting the battles on maps, the German high command understood that ten divisions would be insufficient. They decided to use twenty, and saw the same result. They increased the number of divisions, again and again. In the end, it was decided: in order to not allow Stalin to seize or destroy the oil industry in Romania, it was necessary to deliver a blow to the Soviet Union with the might of the entire German armed forces.

On July 21, 1940, Hitler for the first time in a very tight circle uttered the idea of the "Russian problem." On July 21 the head of ground forces, General Field Marshal W. Brauchitsch, received an order from Hitler to begin developing a specific plan for war in the East. The next day, Brauchitsch entrusted Halder, the head of general staff for ground forces, with fully evaluating all the different potentialities "in a military operation against Russia." Major General Erich Marcks was then appointed to Halder's staff as an aide for developing the specifics of the eastern campaign. On July 29 Marcks began planning a military campaign against Russia.¹

For the Soviet Union, the consequences of a bloodless victory in Romania were catastrophic. First of all, neutral Romania was faced with a terrible choice: whose side should it take? Europe was being torn into pieces by two monsters, Hitler and Stalin. Stalin had suddenly demanded Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, and Romania was forced to give them up. What would Stalin demand tomorrow? Hitler, on the other hand, did not demand anything. The choice was simple, and Romania got Hitler's protection. The result: the Soviet Union obtained another hostile country along its border; the front, that was supposed to protect the USSR in case of war, stretched for almost another eight hundred kilometers; and Hitler received an ally that held oil. Without oil, Germany could not fight. In other words, having Romania in his arms, Hitler could attack the Soviet Union. Without this new alliance the attack would have been impossible. But the most important effect lay in something else. Stalin frightened Hitler. It was precisely the "liberation" of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina that acted as the last warning for Hitler. A direct Soviet threat arose over the oil fields of Romania, and precisely because of this threat Hitler ordered his commanders to prepare a strike against the Soviet Union.

In Stalin's career there were few errors. One of the few, but the most significant one, was the occupation of Bessarabia in 1940. He could have taken Bessarabia and continued on to Ploiești, which would have meant the destruction of Germany. Or, he could have waited until Hitler landed troops in Britain, and after that he could have taken over all of Romania. This too would have ended the "thousand-year Reich." Stalin, however, made one step in the direction of oil, took over the launching ground for the next attack—and stopped to wait. Through these actions, he showed interest in Romanian oil and alarmed Hitler, who before this had concentrated on the West, North, and South, without paying much attention to "neutral" Stalin in the East.

On July 16, 1940, Hitler signed the directive No.16 concerning preparations for landing troops in Great Britain. The operation was given the code name *Zeelowe* (Sea Lion); the plan was for the operation to be completed by August 15. But the annexation of Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into the Soviet Union forced Hitler to make a sharp U-turn and look at what was happening behind his back.

Why did Stalin need Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina? Here is the official answer of the Soviet historians to that question: "From the Bessarabian territory, the Soviet air force could keep Romanian oil industry, which was the main supplier of oil to Germany, under constant threat. Northern Bukovina was needed because through its territory went a railroad of strategic importance, which stretched from Odessa through Kishinev, Chernovtsi, to Lvov, and which had a European track which enabled it to allow usage by railroad cars from all over Europe."²

Here is what Hitler had said regarding the same matter, but half a century earlier:

It is absolutely obvious that the Soviets were determined to direct the unfolding of events in the Balkans in the direction necessary to them, and in that manner to transform the area into launching grounds for an attack on us and the remaining countries of Europe. And, doing everything possible to achieve this goal, they simultaneously declared readiness to sign trade agreements with us, which would seem to be favorable to us but would in fact cut us off from our oil sources as soon as their preparations for the decisive coup were finished. In the summer of 1941 they intended to deliver a crushing defeat to Romania, for it was the only country, except Russia, that delivered us oil.³

Soviet historiography advanced Hitler's argument. It talks not only of a real Soviet threat to the only German oil source, but also about a segment of railway for European cars. In the Soviet Union, the railways use a broad gauge. Central and Western Europe use a narrow gauge. In September 1939, during the partition of Poland, the Red Army seized half of Poland's locomotives and railroad cars. They were useless in the territory of the Soviet Union, because the gauge on the "liberated" territories was quickly changed to fit the broad Soviet standard. But Stalin prepared for the "liberation" of Germany and the rest of Europe. During the course of the first future operations, before the German gauge was amended to fit the Soviet standard, Stalin would need many locomotives and trains with a narrow gauge to supply his troops that were quickly moving westward. The Polish locomotives and trains clearly did not suffice to supply millions of tons of ammunition, arms, liquid fuel, and spare parts. That is why Stalin took Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina—to expand the number of trains for railways with a narrow gauge. In the course of the Bessarabian campaign, Soviet forces captured 141 locomotives, 1,866 covered train cars, 325 half-covered train cars, 45 platforms, 19 cisterns, 31 passenger cars, and 2 luggage cars.⁴ But even that was not enough for Stalin. At the Soviet-Romanian talks in July 1940, regarding the settlement of contested issues, the Soviet representatives demanded that Romania return all captured mobile railroad units. On July 31, 1940, the two sides signed an agreement on the transfer of 175 locomotives and 4,375 cars to the USSR by August 25.⁵

In a defensive war, trains seized in Poland, Bessarabia, and Northern Bukovina would not have been needed. Thus, Stalin needed Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina not for defense, not in order to "bring the people happiness." Stalin's plot was much broader and deeper: to take Hitler by the throat and to bring "happiness" to all of Europe.

A question arises: are we not giving too much importance to the role played by Romanian oil? Did not Germany establish her own production of synthetic fuel? Such an industry did indeed exist, but the problem of fuel was still not resolved. First of all, it is important to keep in mind that synthetic fuel can never compete in quality with fuel made from petroleum. The use of synthetic fuel significantly lowers the tactical and technical characteristics of weaponry, most of all airplanes, tanks, and ships. Your designers can create a wonderful aircraft, your factories can have the best technological capabilities in the world, your workers and engineers can put into the building process of the plane all their talent and effort, but with low-quality fuel the plane will still be slow, weak, and clumsy.

On top of all this, synthetic fuel is also expensive. With timber, if there was a shortage, Hitler's Germany used potato stalks. Even though they were lower in quality than wood, at least they were cheap. But the production of synthetic fuel costs seven to twelve times as much as the production of fuel from petroleum. Hitler's decision to use synthetic fuel was not born out of good fortunes. Very few would be willing to repeat his experiences. The following facts enable us to judge the quality and costs of synthetic fuel. In the second half of the twentieth century the world suffered from an oil crisis more than once. At the beginning of the new millennium, the global chemical industry is far more powerful than the chemical industry of Germany in 1941. And still, for some reason there is no rush to produce synthetic fuels today.

Now, let us talk about quantity. Germany's minimum requirements for oil in 1941 were estimated at around 20 million tons.⁶ Hitler had allies who had armies, navies, and air forces, but they too did not have petroleum. They too had to be supplied by German fuel. Germany in 1941 was producing 4.1 million tons of synthetic fuel—one-fifth of the bare minimum. If one keeps in mind the allies, with whom Germany had to share, then the percentage of synthetic fuel in the overall balance of 1941 is completely insignificant. Aside from synthetic fuel, real petroleum came to Germany from Austria, Czechoslovakia, France, Hungary, and Poland. Altogether, in 1941 that made 1.3 million tons. So for 1941 Germany made synthetic fuel and received real petroleum from occupied countries—together, this makes 5.4 million tons of fuel. Without the Romanian oil, with the remaining amount of fuel the German armies, navies, air forces, transport, and industry would have been able to fight for only three months out of the year and would have had to spend the remaining nine months shivering—until the next year.

Hitler thought that if the Red Army defeated Romania in 1940 or 1941, without Romanian oil Germany could hold on until the spring of 1942. This optimism cannot hold up when checked with arithmetic. Without Romanian oil only a quarter of the needs of the German economy and armed forces would have been met, and with poor and very expensive fuel at that. A taking of Romania by the Red Army in 1940 or 1941 would have turned into a catastrophe for Germany within two to three months.

How much oil was coming from Romania? In 1941, 5 million tons came in. This was not enough. But without it living and fighting were made impossible. While receiving oil from Romania, Germany could balance on a tightrope, somehow making do with an amount about half of its minimum needs. The petroleum situation in the invading army (which, clearly, was in a privileged position relative to all other consumers) on the eve of the war against the Soviet Union was the following: aircraft fuel was more or less in good supply; car and diesel fuel, on the other hand, was predicted to be at a 10 percent deficit even in July, and

by August, the army on the Eastern front was going to have to be fueled, for the most part, by supplies directly out of Romania. By fall, the German petroleum reserves were predicted to be completely exhausted, with aircraft fuel only at 50 percent of the required amount, car fuel at 25 percent, and diesel fuel at 50 percent.⁷ Thus, the German high command depended heavily on the brevity of the Russian campaign, on shipments from Romania, and on plundered reserves.

During the course of the entire war, Germany's problem with petroleum was never resolved. On June 6, 1942, the OKW evaluated the situation: "The supply of fuel and oil materials in the current year will be one of the weaknesses of our military potential. The shortage of oil materials of all sorts is so great that freedom of operations will be threatened in all three branches of the armed forces, and will have a negative effect on military industry as well. . . . A small improvement can be anticipated toward the end of the year, when new factories for the production of synthetic fuel will be launched, but this will not bring a drastic improvement in the supply of Germany."⁸ Germany's supply worsened as the war progressed. Toward the end of the war, Germany was the first in the world to start producing jet-engine planes. The Me-262 fighter surpassed all other planes in speed and weapons. Germany produced 1,433 of them. However, there was not enough kerosene, and without kerosene the best fighter in the world could not fly. Out of almost 1,500 planes of this type built, only slightly more than two hundred took part in battles. The rest remained on the ground.

In the summer of 1940 Stalin made a fateful mistake. Already in 1939 Hitler had found himself in a strategic dead end, without an exit. In 1940 Stalin raised axes over Hitler's head from two sides: over iron ore, timber, and nickel in the north, and over oil in the south. Stalin stalled, waiting for Hitler to attack Britain. But in 1941 Britain was not dangerous to Hitler. The danger came from Stalin. Hitler had no other choice. So, he jumped on Stalin. On June 21, 1941, Hitler wrote a letter to Mussolini: "Russia is trying to destroy the Romanian oil fields. . . . The task for our armies is eliminating this threat as soon as possible." Herein lies the cause of Hitler's attack. This was not at all a struggle for *Lebensraum* (living space).

The strategic miscalculations of 1940 were so rough, deep, and frightening that their catastrophic consequences for the fate of the Soviet Union could not later be resolved by any genius decisions and brilliant victories. Because of Stalin's and Zhukov's mistakes, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, destroyed its army, and crushed a large part of Soviet industry. In the end, the Soviet Union was unable to conquer Europe. Stalin lost the war for Europe and global domination. The free world survived, and it could not coexist with the Soviet Union. Therefore, the crumbling of the Soviet Union became inevitable. The roots of that crumbling lie in Zhukov's victorious venture into Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina in the summer of 1940. The Soviet Union won World War II, but for some reason disappeared from the globe after this distinguishing victory. When Communists celebrate the so-called "victory day," I ask: Where is this great victorious country? Where did it disappear? Germany lost the war, but we see her, one of the mightiest powers of contemporary Europe, at whose feet we now beg. So where is the great, mighty, uncrushable Soviet Union? Germany lost, but it is still here. The Soviet Union won, but it no longer exists. Who needs such a victory?

Destruction of the Buffer States between Germany and the Soviet Union

We are doing a deed that, if it succeeds, will turn the whole world upside down and will free the entire workers' class.

—J. STALIN, IN *PRAVDA*, FEBRUARY 5, 1931

It is a fact of history that on June 22, 1941, Germany attacked the Soviet Union, suddenly and treacherously. However, it is a very strange fact. Before World War II, Germany had no common border with the Soviet Union and therefore could not attack it, especially in a sudden fashion. Germany and the Soviet Union were separated by a solid barrier of neutral countries. In order for the Soviet-German war to take place, it was necessary to create the right conditions: to destroy the barrier of neutral countries and establish common Soviet-German borders.

Everyone interested in the date June 22, 1941, before cursing Hitler and accusing him of treachery, has to answer at least two questions: who destroyed the buffer row of neutral countries between Germany and the Soviet Union and what for? The barrier between Germany and the USSR was double-layered, and only in one place single-layered. Poland was the only country that had at once a border with both Germany and the Soviet Union. Poland is the shortest, most direct, most convenient route between the USSR and Germany. Poland is the thinnest part of the dividing wall between the two countries. Obviously, the potential aggressor, wishing for a Soviet-German war to take place, would try to cut a corridor precisely in this location. Contrarily, the country not wishing for a war should, with all its might, all its wisdom, all the force of its international authority, not allow its adversary to penetrate Polish territory. Or, as a last resort, begin fighting that opponent on Polish soil, without letting him on its territory.

Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*: “We want to return to that point, at which our previous development six hundred years ago was halted. We want to halt Germany’s constant advance to the south and the west of Europe and decisively point our finger in the direction of territories located in the east.” In the 1930s, especially after the Nazis came to power, Hitler’s

frankness sounded with a new power. But Hitler could not attack Stalin, because they did not share any borders.

Hitler began his movement to the east by turning to Stalin with a proposal for joint efforts in making a hole in the dividing wall between them. Stalin, with pleasure, accepted and enthusiastically tore down the Polish wall, hacking a corridor to meet Hitler. Hitler's motives were understandable. But how does one explain Stalin's actions?

Communist historians invented explanations for the deeds of the Soviet Union. The first explanation: having bloodied and ripped apart Poland, the Soviet Union moved its frontiers to the west, and thus fortified its security. What a strange explanation. Soviet frontiers were indeed moved two to three hundred kilometers, but at the same time Germany moved its frontiers two to three hundred kilometers to the east. This move decreased, rather than increased, the Soviet Union's security. Furthermore, the completely new factor of a common Soviet-German border arose, which carried as a consequence the possibility of sudden war between Germany and the Soviet Union. Explanation number two: having axed Poland in the back at the moment of her desperate fight against the Nazis, Stalin attempted to delay the moment the Soviet-German war would start. This explanation stems from the old pretext: we started a fire in the neighbor's house, hoping that the fire will reach and destroy our house later than it destroys his. The third explanation: France and Great Britain did not want to make a deal with the Soviet Union. It is a blatant lie. France and Great Britain did want an anti-Hitler treaty with the USSR and started negotiations in Moscow. The negotiations were suddenly stopped by the Soviets who immediately signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with Germany.

Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Finland, and Romania were natural allies of the USSR. Unlike France and Britain, these countries were potential victims of Hitler's *Drang Nach Ost* (Drive towards the East). With them, the USSR should have sought an alliance against Hitler. But Stalin was not seeking such an alliance, and in the cases where pacts did exist, the Soviet Union did not act in accordance with them. Stalin could have remained neutral, but instead he stabbed in the back those who fought against Hitler.

Having crushed Poland, Hitler broke a corridor through the dividing wall. Now, he had a common border with the Soviet Union that was 570 km in length. Hitler calculated this to be sufficient and went back to his affairs in the west, in Africa, in the Mediterranean, and in the Atlantic. What should Stalin have done, when presented with a corridor 570 km in length and with some time to spare? He should have hurriedly fortified his defenses precisely in this area. Along the old borders, there was a powerful row of fortified regions. It should have immediately been reinforced and improved. And it should have been complemented by a second line of defense, and a third, fourth, and fifth line. He should have urgently begun to lay mines under roads, bridges, fields, begun to dig anti-tank trenches and cover them with anti-tank artillery.

Sometime later, in 1943 in Kursk, the Red Army prepared to push back the advance of the Germans. During a short period of time Soviet troops created on the huge front six continuous lines of defense, each one hundreds of kilometers in length. The lines were situated one behind the other, so the total depth of defense was 250 to 300 km. Each kilometer was saturated with trenches, communication tunnels, covers, and firing positions. The average concentration of mines in a given area was brought to seven thousand anti-tank and

anti-personnel mines per kilometer of front line. The concentration of anti-tank weapons was brought to a mind-blowing level: forty-one cannons per kilometer, not counting field and anti-aircraft artillery and dug-in tanks. In no time an empty field was transformed into a truly impenetrable defense.

In 1939 conditions for defense were much more favorable: forests, rivers, swamps, few roads, and lots of time. Soviet troops could have created a powerful barrier on the new Soviet-German border, especially since the opening was not wide. But at that moment the Soviet Union stopped producing anti-tank and anti-aircraft cannon. Instead of making the area impassable, it was quickly made more penetrable. The Red Army built bridges and roads, expanded and improved the railroads. Previously existing fortifications were torn down and buried under mounds of ground. One participant of those events, professor and Colonel I. G. Starinov of the GRU, candidly described what went on: "A stupid situation arose. When we faced weak armies of small countries, our borders were truly locked. But when Nazi Germany became our neighbor, the defense structures along the former border were abandoned and even partly dismantled."¹ And: "Engineering command of the Red Army sent a request for 120,000 railroad mines of delayed action. In the event of an invasion, this amount would have sufficed to paralyze the German army's supply routes from the rear, on which it entirely depended. But instead of the requested amount, they sent . . . 120 mines."² By the way, a mine is the most simple, most inexpensive, and highly effective weapon. The Soviet Union had huge land mine production, but after the new borders with Germany were established this production was curbed.

What did Stalin do aside from dismantling his own defenses? He also tore to pieces the barrier of neutral countries. For Hitler, one hole in the wall was enough. For Stalin, it was not. Hitler (with Stalin's help) demolished the leadership of only one country in the dividing barrier—Poland. Stalin (without outside help) did the same in three countries (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), tried to do it in a fourth country (Finland), and actively prepared for doing it in a fifth country (Romania), having first ripped from it a huge chunk of land. Hitler strove to force only one opening in the wall, Stalin tried to demolish the entire wall.³ And Stalin accomplished his goal. Only ten months after the signing of the non-aggression pact the dividing barrier was completely destroyed, from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea, by Stalin's efforts. There remained no neutral countries between Stalin and Hitler, and thus the conditions for attack were set.

During this short time all of Stalin's neighbors to the west became his victims. Aside from nations sharing borders with the Soviet Union, Lithuania, which did not have any common borders with the USSR at all, also fell under Stalin's domination. The appearance of Soviet troops in Lithuania meant that they had truly reached Germany's real borders: from September 1939 the Soviet-German border passed through the conquered Polish territories, and from the summer of 1940, Soviet troops came to the border of Eastern Prussia. Here it cannot at all be said that the monstrous Hitler was hacking corridors to the east, and the stupid Stalin was assisting him. No, Stalin hacked corridors to the west without any outside help.

Did the Red Army plan to stop at the borders it attained? The answer was given by the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, Marshal of the Soviet Union S. K. Timoshenko: "In Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia we destroyed a power of landowners and capitalists hateful to the workers. The Soviet Union grew significantly and advanced its borders to the west. The

capitalist world was forced to tremble and cede to our will. We, the fighters of the Red Army, should not be content and stop at what has been attained!”⁴ This was not the speech of a politician and not the announcement of a journalist. It was an official decree for the Red Army. But to the west of Soviet borders there was only Germany, or her allies; and a pact had been signed with Germany

Stalin made no secret of how a true Communist should view promises and pacts: “The question of struggle . . . needs to be examined not from the standpoint of fairness, but from the standpoint of demands of the political moment, from the standpoint of the political demands of the [Communist] Party at each given moment.”⁵ “A war can turn upside down each and every pact.”⁶ Here are the “political demands”: “History says that when any country wants to fight against another country, even one that it does not neighbor, it begins to seek out borders, through which it could reach the borders of the country it wants to attack,”⁷ Stalin wrote.

Stalin needed a situation in which “capitalists gnaw at each other like dogs.”⁸ The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact created precisely that situation. *Pravda*’s tone was excited: “Each war like this one brings us closer to that happy period, when there will be no more killings among people.”⁹ Lieutenant General S. M. Krivoshein describes a conversation with his deputy, P. M. Latyshev (at that time Krivoshein commanded the 25th Motorized Corps): “We made a deal with the Germans, but this does not mean anything. . . . Now is the best time for a final and constructive resolution to all of the world’s problems.”¹⁰

Before the war, the main Communist Party newspaper, *Pravda*, did not call upon the Soviet people to build defenses. *Pravda*’s tone was different: soon the entire world will belong to us. “Our country is great. The globe itself needs to rotate nine hours in order for our huge Soviet country to enter the new year of its victories. There will be a time when it will need for this not nine hours, but a whole twenty-four. . . . And who knows where we will be greeting the New Year in five or ten years: along what time belt, on what new Soviet meridian?”¹¹ With the date of the Soviet break-in into Europe approaching, *Pravda* became more and more straightforward: “Divide your enemies, temporarily satisfy the demands of each of them, and then crush them one by one, without giving them an opportunity to unite.”¹²

Hitler decided that he should wait no longer. He made the first move without waiting for the blow in the back from the liberating axe. But even having started the war in the most favorable circumstances that had ever existed for an assailant, he was unable to win. Even in the most unfavorable of circumstances, the Red Army managed to “liberate” half of Europe and dominate Eastern Europe for half a century. One wonders what the outcome would have been if the best German forces had left the European continent to go to Africa and the British Isles, and, behind their back, the Red Army had destroyed the only German oil source in Romania?

Destruction of the Security Pale on the Eve of the War

Mines are powerful stuff, but they are a means for the weak, for those defending themselves. We are strong. We need mine-clearing measures rather than mines.

—G. I. KULIK, MARSHAL OF THE SOVIET UNION

To prevent a sudden enemy attack, a country preparing for defense deploys its troops not on the very border, but deeper in its territory. Between the border and the main line of defense, it creates a continuous zone of obstacles and barriers. This zone is called the security pale. Its purpose is to wear down the aggressor before he meets the main forces of the defense.

In the 1920s, during their attempt to occupy Poland, commanders of the Red Army saw the effectiveness of the Polish security pales for the defense of Poland and had the bitter experiences of advancing through such pales. That is why after the Polish war the special Soviet government commissions studied the western regions of their country and determined the most and the least penetrable zones. All bridges in the western regions of the country were prepared for explosion. Bridge patrols were ready to blow up the bridges at any moment. Aside from bridges, large pipelines, depots, water pumps, water towers, high mounds, and low gullies were all wired for explosion.¹ At the end of 1929, in the Kiev military district alone, sixty demolition squads, numbering 1,400 people, were trained and ready. They had at their disposal “1,640 fully ready charges and tens of thousands of incendiary pipes that could be put into action almost instantly!”² Such work was conducted in other military districts as well.

In addition to demolition experts’ squads, railroad-blocking battalions were formed in the western regions of the country. Their task included completely demolishing major railroad centers in the event of retreat, blocking the main routes, and installing powerful charges with delayed-action detonators in the event that the enemy attempted to restore the roads. Ukraine had four such battalions by 1932.³ On top of that, railroad switch transfers, communication equipment, telegraph systems, and in some cases railroad tracks, were all prepared for

evacuation. The Soviet security pale was constantly improving. The list of objects prepared for explosion or evacuation became longer. New obstacles and barricades were erected, new forest abatises were prepared, and artificial reservoirs were dug in front of defensive structures; areas of the region could be turned into swamps if necessary.

In September 1939 the border of the USSR was moved 200 to 300 km to the west. The depth of the security pale increased greatly. Moreover, the railroad system on the territories acquired after the division of Poland was poorly developed. Out of 6,696 km of tracks, only 2,008 were two-way, and even they had a low capacity. In case of emergency, it was very easy to make them completely unusable.

In November 1939, the Red Army in Finland learned the hard way that a security pale could ease the position of the defense and complicate the position of the aggressor. Crossing the Finnish security pale required a huge expenditure of time, strength, resources, and blood.

All Soviet commanders expressed their awe at the Finnish line of defense, and among them was K. A. Meretskov, Commander of the 7th Army during the war against Finland.⁴ After having surmounted the Finnish defense line and evaluated its qualities, Meretskov was appointed Chief of the General Staff. In accordance with his newly acquired experience, he should have reinforced the Soviet security pale. But he did exactly the opposite. Meretskov ordered the destruction of the security pale created earlier on the old western borders, the disbanding of the demolition experts' squads, the dismantling of the charges, the disarming of the mines, and the flattening out of all barricades. He also ordered his troops not to create a security pale on the Polish territory annexed to the Soviet Union in 1939; to lead the main forces of the Red Army to the edge of the borders (without protecting those forces with any kind of security pale); to move the bulk of the strategic supplies of the Red Army from the depths of the country to the western regions; to build air bases and roads in Western Belorussia and Western Ukraine; to transform one-track railroads into two-track ones (to raise their cargo-carrying capacity); and to build new roads leading straight to the German border.

Here are the results of that policy. In 1939, Poland was divided between Germany and the Soviet Union. Some rivers became borders. Bridges on those rivers that were not used were still kept intact. In the line held by the 4th Army alone, there were six such bridges.

The former Chief of Staff of the 4th Army, Colonel General L. M. Sandalov, asked: "Why, to ask frankly, were so many bridges across the Bug [river] kept intact in the line of the 4th Army?"⁵ The German command hoped to use the bridges in an aggressive war, and thus did not ask for their destruction. But what did the Soviet command hope for?

At the beginning of the war, a huge number of German troops went across those bridges, crushing the Soviet 4th Army in a surprise attack. The defeat of the 4th Army opened the way to the rear of the really powerful 10th Army, which also suffered unimaginable devastation. Without encountering any more barriers, Guderian's tanks headed straight for Minsk in Belarus. The German troops advanced without complications, taking bridges on the rivers Daugava, Berezina, Nieman, Pripiat, and Dnepr.

In January 1941, Stalin replaced Chief of General Staff K. A. Meretskov for not being sufficiently active in the construction of new roads, bridges, and air bases in the new regions. On February 1, 1941, General of the Army G. K. Zhukov replaced Meretskov as Chief of the General Staff. The work began at a truly Zhukov speed. Before 1941, the Red

Army had five railroad brigades. Zhukov immediately increased this number to thirteen, ten of them in the west of the country. Each brigade consisted of one regiment, two separate battalions, and supply units. Almost all railroad troops were concentrated in the western border regions and worked intensively to modernize old railroads and build new ones right up to the border.⁶ Some of the new railroad lines were: Proskurov—Ternopol—Lvov; Lvov—Iavorov—state border; Lvov—Peremyshl—state border; Timkovichi—Baranovichi; Belovezha—Oranchitsa—state border. The names of some of these stations demonstrated that the Soviet leadership regarded the border area as its own rear zone, where in the event of a quick advance to the west the Soviet army would have to deliver millions of men, millions of tons of ammunition, fuel, and other supplies.

Simultaneously with the construction of railroads, automobile roads were built in the western regions (for example, Orsha—Lepel, Lvov—Peremyshl, Belaya Tserkov—Kazatin, Minsk—Brest). What were those roads built for?

During preparations for a defensive war, roads parallel to the front line are laid down, so that reserves could be moved from passive areas of defense to dangerous areas. Those roads must not be near the border, but much deeper in the country, leaving the border regions as clear of roads and bridges as possible. But the Red Army was building roads and railroads from east to west, which was usually done when preparing for advance, for a quick transfer of reserves from the depths of the country to the borders, and for further supplying the troops after they crossed the borders. New roads led to border towns: Peremyshl, Brest, Iavorov. Zhukov remembered: “The web of automobile roads in Western Belorussia and Western Ukraine was in poor condition. Many bridges could not hold the weight of the medium tanks and artillery.”⁷ Zhukov should have rejoiced at that fact. He should have commanded his men to covertly weaken the support beams on those bridges and thus lure the attacking enemy to send his tanks to those weakened bridges, to their sure demise. Instead, he built roads and replaced old bridges with new ones, so that any tank and any artillery could pass through.

The official *History of the Kiev Military District* stated: “In early 1941, Hitler’s forces began to build bridges, railroads, and field air bases.”⁸ Obviously, these were signs of preparations for attack. The Soviet railroad forces were doing exactly the same: “Railroad troops in Western Ukraine worked to develop and strengthen the railroads.”⁹ Railroad brigades, created by Zhukov’s order, completed a tremendous amount of work on the Soviet territory, but their main job was planned to be on enemy territory: they had to follow the advancing army and quickly get through the enemy’s security pale, repair enemy roads and bridges, and change the European narrow gauge to the broad Soviet standard one. Right on the borders, they piled huge reserves of railroad tracks, demountable bridges, construction materials, and coal.

In addition to the ten railroad brigades in the western regions, almost all the Soviet engineering troops were concentrated along the western borders. Various construction units and squads were active before the war in the border strip. The task was to prepare the “initial points for attack, [the] foundation of passageways for columns, . . . operational and tactical camouflage, organization of joint action in the storming groups with infantry and tanks; [and] to provide the equipment for crossing rivers.”¹⁰

On the eve of the war, the USSR launched a gigantic campaign to modernize and widen its road network in the western regions. All that work harmed the USSR very soon.

Hitler used the roads, bridges, stocks of coal, rails, and the sectional bridges that the Soviet leadership prepared in the western regions of its country.

As we know, all that did not help the invading German army: its advance was not as fast as planned. But even this advance could have been stopped if Zhukov had not built roads on the eve of the war, had not created huge reserves of railroad tracks, bridges, and construction materials. He should have introduced an effective system of defense: all bridges should have been blown up, all materiel reserves liquidated, railroads and trains evacuated, roads destroyed, drowned, turned into swamps and saturated with mines.

On Soviet territory, all mines were disarmed and the barriers taken down. On the eve of the German invasion, General of the Army D. Pavlov, a commander of the Western Special Military District (then already secretly transformed into the Western Front), said that the Soviet sappers were not paying enough attention to preparing themselves properly for removing mines and other obstacles on enemy territory.

If the Soviet marshals had known better, they would have started their war on June 21: then they would not have needed to take down German obstacles, because the German army was doing on the German territory exactly what the Red Army was doing on Soviet territory. In early June, German troops were disarming mines, evening out barricades, and concentrating troops right on the border, without keeping in front of them any security pale.

Soviet Marshal K. S. Moskalenko, who in 1941 commanded the First Artillery Anti-Tank Brigade, counted those German actions as an unquestionable piece of evidence that the Germans would attack soon.¹¹ At the same time, the NKVD border troops were dismantling their own barbwire on the very border to clear the way into enemy territory for the “liberation” army. They had cut barbwire in exactly the same way before the “liberation” of Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Bessarabia, and Northern Bukovina. Now it was Germany’s turn.

Partisans or Saboteurs?

Leninism dictates that a socialist country, using the favorable world situation, must take on the initiative of making military advances against the capitalist surroundings with the purpose of widening the socialist front. . . . Leninism's motto, "defend your land on foreign soil," can at any moment turn into practical action."

—DIRECTIVE OF THE MAIN POLITICAL DIRECTORATE OF THE
RED ARMY, JUNE 3, 1941.

Through partisan actions, one can fight against even the strongest enemy. The aggressor can take over the country in a matter of days, but then for years wage an exhausting war against partisan groups. History abounds with examples of small and poorly armed partisan units eventually defeating powerful armies.

The Red Army had a vast experience fighting against partisans. Commanders of the Red Army knew how difficult and costly partisan warfare could be. During the Russian civil war, the population of the former Russian Empire resisted the Communists mostly through partisan methods. An entire partisan army under the leadership of Nestor Makhno was active in southern Ukraine. In the Tambov province, after the civil war, the Communists waged a real war against the partisan army of Alexander Antonov. In Siberia and in the northern Caucasus, war against partisans continued until the mid-1920s and in Central Asia until the beginning of the 1930s.

Soviet leaders knew that partisan tactics would win the war against any aggressor. The Soviet Union has the largest territory of any country in the world. That territory naturally facilitated partisan warfare. Did Stalin create light mobile units and station them in the woods in the event of a German attack? Yes, Stalin created such units. They were created back in the 1920s. In Belorussia alone, during peacetime there were six partisan units, numbering three hundred to five hundred men each. One should not be confused by the seemingly small numbers. The units were comprised only of commanders, organizers, and specialists. Each peacetime partisan unit was a nucleus, around which at the very beginning of the war developed a powerful formation numbering in the thousands.

Secret bases for peacetime partisan groups were created in impenetrable forests and islets amid the swamps. During peacetime, subterranean shelters, hospitals, storages, and workshops for the production of weapons and ammunition were built. In peacetime, only Belorussian secret subterranean storages held ammunition, weapons, and supplies for fifty thousand partisans. Secret schools were formed for preparing partisan leaders, organizers, and instructors. Secret research and development centers worked on creating special means of warfare, arms, communication channels, and equipment. Partisans were often subjected to training and tests, with divisions of the NKVD often playing the role of the enemy. In addition, small groups were prepared for undercover activities. These groups, in case of aggression, did not retreat to the forests, but stayed in the cities and towns, with the task of “gaining the trust of the enemy” and “offering him assistance.”

That sort of work was conducted not only in Belorussia, but also in Ukraine, in the Crimea, in the Leningrad region, and other areas. The same duties were simultaneously, but totally independently from the NKVD, performed by the Soviet Military Intelligence: it set up secret bases, apartments, and hiding places, and prepared lines of communication for conspirators. Soviet Military Intelligence had its own secret schools, its own organizers, and its own instructors. Aside from the NKVD and the military intelligence, the Communist Party prepared some of its leaders in the western regions of the country for transfer to an underground position in the event of a territory takeover by the enemy.

The partisan units were formed in the so-called “death zone”—the Soviet security pale, where during retreat of Soviet troops all bridges should be blown up, tunnels buried, railroads destroyed, and telephone cables and other communication channels evacuated. The partisans had to prevent the enemy from restoring the destroyed infrastructure. The partisans were almost undefeatable—their leaders knew safe passages, which the enemy did not know, through the giant minefields; in an emergency, the partisans could easily disappear from any pursuers into the mined forests and swamps, which were impassable to the enemy.

The security pale and partisan groups, ready at any minute to act in a zone of destruction, were the great defenses of the Soviet Union. However, in the second half of the 1930s, as the country’s industrial and military might grew, the Soviet Union tended to fight enemies on their soil rather than protect Soviet land. From that period, defense systems became unnecessary. “Whole caches of weaponry, ammunition, [and] explosives, intended for partisan forces and kept hidden, were liquidated. The network of partisan training schools, along with their very competent leaders, was eliminated. Partisan battle groups were disbanded. Only the few partisan leaders who confronted the fascists in Spain kept their places. Among them were A. K. Sprogis, S. A. Vaupshassov, N. A. Prokopyuk, I. G. Starinov, and others.”¹

On November 30, 1939, the Red Army began the “liberation” of Finland, and hit up against the same elements of self-defense that had earlier existed in the Soviet Union: a line of concrete fortifications, a security pale before it, and light squads of partisan fighters within. The light ski units of Finnish partisans carried out sudden strikes and then immediately disappeared into the forests. The Red Army suffered tremendous casualties from those strikes, and all its modern technology was useless in the fight against an enemy that evaded open battle. Perhaps, having learned a cruel lesson in Finland, Stalin changed his mind and once again created partisan formations in the western regions of the Soviet Union? No, he did not.

One of the fathers of Soviet military terrorism, GRU colonel and professor I. G. Starinov, between 1930 and 1933 headed the secret school that prepared partisan groups which were subordinate to the Soviet Military Intelligence. The colonel wrote in his memoirs: "Safely hidden underground, the weapons and explosives awaited their hour. But before this hour could come, the covert partisan bases were emptied, unquestionably with the knowledge of, and, probably, under direct orders from Stalin."²

During the war, P. K. Ponomarenko was Chief of the Main Staff of the Partisan Movement. After the war, he voiced his anguish and frustration: "Stalin's incorrectly aimed statements that, if attacked, we would fight only on enemy territory led to the complete dismantling of all efforts to harness the experience from previous partisan wars and to develop corresponding mobilization directions. As a result, the initial phase of the war was marked by a particularly difficult effort to organize the partisan movement. The Party had to pay dearly for Stalin's mistakes."³

Colonel of the KGB S. A. Vaushpass⁴ spent the 1930s training Soviet partisans in case of enemy aggression and occupation. He explained the reason for the disbanding of the partisan formations on Soviet territory: "During those threatening pre-war years, a doctrine arose about war on foreign soil . . . it had [a] very clearly expressed aggressive character."⁵

We can agree with these statements or we can dispute them. But so far, no other reason for the destruction of the partisan movement has been put forward.

Destruction of the Stalin Line

Only naïve people think that defense is the main task of fortified regions. No, fortified regions are built for a more reliable preparation for advance. They must reliably cover the reserves of attacking groups, deflect any enemy attempt to curb the unfolding of attack, and with the transition of our troops to advance, offer them full fire cover.

—MAJOR GENERAL P. G. GRIGORENKO,
YOU ONLY MEET RATS IN THE UNDERGROUND

From 1926 to 1937, thirteen fortified regions were constructed along the western borders of the USSR. That chain of fortifications was unofficially known as “the Stalin Line.”

A fortified region (FR) was an area prepared for defense; at the same time, it was also a military formation, equal to a regiment or a brigade in number but equal to a corps in firepower. Each FR had a command and staff, from two to eight machine-gun and artillery battalions, an artillery regiment, several separate heavy artillery batteries, a tank battalion, a communications battalion, an engineering-sapper battalion and other formations. Each FR occupied an area from 100 to 180 km long and 30 to 50 km deep. The region was equipped with a complex system of concrete and armored military and supply buildings, mostly subterranean. Within the FR, there were underground concrete storage units, electricity stations, hospitals, command centers, and communication quarters. The underground constructions were connected through a sophisticated system of tunnels, galleries, and covered passageways. There was also an intricate web of railroads for bringing in materials, maneuvering armored trains, and quickly transferring reserves to the troops. Each FR could independently conduct military operations during a long period of time and in isolated conditions.

The fortified regions were built by the distinguished fortification expert of the twentieth century, Professor Dmitriy Karbyshev. In 1940, he was awarded the rank of lieutenant general of engineering troops. Simultaneously with the developments on the western frontiers, Karbyshev’s projects also encompassed construction of fortified regions in the Far East and in

the Trans-Baikal region. Those field strongholds are still in use today, in the twenty-first century. In 1990, the Soviet military newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* described one of the active military buildings: “This is mono-concrete. Solid cast. The depth of the walls is up to one and a half meters. For half a century, they have been there, but even today not a single shell could take them. . . . Roofs of casemates have a low-profile. Ammunition. Command. Diesel engines. Batteries. Filters. An automatic heating system. . . . In this shell, filled with instruments and arms, one feels as if [one is] in a giant buried tank or a submarine hidden underground.”¹

Each FR consisted of “pillboxes,” each equipped with its own defenses and each capable of independently defending itself if fully encircled by the enemy, diverting to itself significant enemy forces and attention. The main fighting unit of the fortified region was the LFP—long-duration firing point. *Krasnaya Zvezda* described one of the standard LFPs from the Stalin Line, the LFP #112 of the Mogilyov-Podolsk FR, as follows: “This was a complicated fortified underground structure, consisting of communication passages, caponiers, and compartments. In there, one could find arms, ammunition, foodstuffs, a mess hall, running water (by the way, still in working condition), a ‘red corner,’ [and] observation and command posts.”² The LFPs are armed with a machine-gun post of three embrasures in which, on stationary rollers, were three ‘Maxim’ machine guns and two half-canopies with 76-mm cannon in each.”³ Such an LFP can be considered average. There were also thousands of small, armed constructions with one or two machine guns, as well as giant fortified ensembles.

Major General P. G. Grigorenko, a participant in the construction of the Stalin Line, described in his memoirs one of the field strongholds built in the similar Mogilyov-Podolsk FR: “Nine firing points, connected by underground passageways, were on the high shores of the Dnestr and kept the river and the opposite shore under dense gun and machine-gun fire.”⁴ Another participant in the construction of the Stalin Line, Colonel R. G. Umanskyi, wrote of multi-kilometer underground structures in the Kiev fortified region.⁵ Yet another participant, Colonel General A. I. Shebunin, said that many concrete defensive structures in the Proskurov fortified region were protected by artificial water barriers. In this FR was raised “a mighty line of defense, which counted more than a thousand various military field strongholds. Many objects were so thoroughly masked that even from close up it was difficult to guess their real designation.”⁶

Construction of the Stalin Line was not publicized like the construction of the French Maginot Line. The Stalin Line was built in secrecy. During the construction of each field stronghold, NKVD units put cordons around several areas. The construction went on simultaneously in all areas, but it was the real thing only in one—the rest were decoys. Not only the local population but also the construction workers had a very vague understanding of what was being built and where.

There were many differences between the Soviet Stalin Line and the French Maginot Line. The Stalin Line could not be bypassed: its flanks went right to the Baltic Sea in the north and the Black Sea in the south. The Stalin Line was built not only to stop infantry, but mostly to stop tanks. The Stalin Line was much deeper. Aside from concrete, the Soviets also used huge quantities of steel, and granite boulders.

Unlike the Maginot Line, the Stalin Line wasn’t built at the very border, but deeper into Soviet territory. A line of fortified regions in the depth of the country means that the first enemy artillery strike will be carried out against an empty space rather than the defending army. Therefore, during a surprise attack, defending garrisons have a minimum of several days to take their places in the casemates and prepare their arms and defense. If the fortified

regions are in the depth of the country, the enemy, before beginning the storming, must cover from 20 or 30 to 100 or 150 km of territory saturated with minefields and other unpleasant surprises. The aggressor will have to cross many rivers and streams whose bridges have been destroyed. Before the storming, enemy troops will already have suffered significant casualties in the hundreds of ambushes along the way.

The security pale before the Stalin Line not only reduced the speed of the enemy and wore out his strength, but it also served as a fog over the sea, behind which hid a row of icebergs. Not knowing the exact location of the field strongholds of the Stalin Line, the enemy could unexpectedly find himself right in front of Soviet armed structures and in the midst of their deadly fire. The location of the Stalin Line deep in Soviet territory, behind the security pale, produced the opportunity to counter the surprise element of attack with a surprise element of defense. The fortified regions were masked and hidden in such a way that in most cases a clash between the aggressor and Stalin's army would be unexpected for the aggressor.

Unlike the Maginot Line, the Stalin Line was not continuous. Rather wide passageways were left between the fortified regions. In an emergency, the passages could quickly be closed with land mines, barricades, or field defense by regular troops. Or the passages could stay open, offering the aggressor the option to not storm the fortifications head on, but to squeeze between them instead. If the enemy attempted the latter, most of his advancing troops would be crushed in several isolated columns. Each column had to advance through a corridor shelled from all sides, with its flanks, rear, and communication lines under constant and serious threat.

The thirteen fortified regions on the Stalin Line came at a tremendous cost in effort and money. In 1938 it was decided to strengthen all thirteen regions by building within them heavy artillery installations. The construction of eight more regions started. In one year, the new fortified regions counted 1,028 armed field strongholds.

Then, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed. The pact created a common border between Germany and the USSR. In such a threatening atmosphere, Stalin could have done any number of things to increase the safety of the western Soviet borders and guarantee the USSR's neutrality in the war. Instead, in the fall of 1939, at the beginning of World War II, he ordered further construction of fortified regions to stop.⁷ Garrisons in fortified regions on the Stalin Line were the first to be cut back in numbers, and then completely disbanded. Soviet factories lowered the output of arms and special materials for field stronghold structures. The existing fortified regions were disarmed; their ammunition, weapons, observation instruments, and communication lines were put in storage.⁸ Some buildings were given to the farming associations for use as crop silos. Most were just buried in soil.

In addition to lowering the production of arms for fortified regions, Soviet industry, after the start of World War II, stopped producing other defense weapons. For example, the production of anti-tank cannon stopped completely, as well as the 76-mm division cannon, which could be used against tanks.⁹ Anti-tank rifles were taken out of production and out of the supply of the Red Army. They were taken away from all formations and put in storage.¹⁰ Everything connected with defense was mercilessly dismantled and destroyed. At the same time, the Red Army was fighting in Finland, where Stalin and his marshals saw that fortified regions and security pales had tremendous value for defense.

To be fair, during the summer of 1940, the construction of a line of fortified regions began right on the new Soviet-German border. However, the new line was never finished. In

the General Staff of the Red Army, these regions were unofficially (and with a dose of irony) referred to as the Molotov Line. It had the same “father”: Professor Karbyshev. The decision to construct it came on June 26, 1940.¹¹ But the defense buildup on the new borders proceeded very slowly, while the destruction on the old borders was surprisingly fast. In the summer of 1941, the tragedy of the Stalin Line reached its climax. Wrote General Grigorenko:

I do not know how future historians will explain this crime against our people. . . . The present ones bypass this occurrence with complete silence, and I myself do not know how to explain it. Many billions of rubles (according to my calculations, more than 120) were taken by the Soviet government from the people to build impassable barriers on the border, from sea to sea, from the grey Baltic to the blue Black Sea. And on the eve of the war, the spring of 1941, loud explosions boomed across the 1,200 km of fortifications. The formidable concrete structures, triple, double, and single embrasure firing points, command and observation points—tens of thousands of long-term defense structures were blown up according to a personal order from Stalin.¹²

The Stalin Line on the old border was already destroyed, while the Molotov Line on the new border was not yet built. Soviet generals and marshals, after Stalin’s death, unanimously expressed their anger. Here are the words of Chief Marshal of Artillery N. N. Voronov: “How could our leadership, without building the necessary defenses on the new western borders of 1939, decide to liquidate and disarm the fortified regions on the old borders?”¹³ In addition, as Marshal M. V. Zakharov declared, it was decided to severely limit or even stop the production of all FR-type weaponry.¹⁴

This is a “red herring” argument used by pro-Communist historians to distract us. They want us to bemoan the folly of breaking the old fortifications line before the new one was ready. But the relevant question is: why break the old one at all? Two lines surely provide better defense than one.

Another pretext is that old fortifications were destroyed in order to move their weapons to the new ones. This is just another set of fallacies. Firstly, the weapons could have been left in the old line, and there had been enough time to order the Soviet industry to supply FR-type weaponry for the new line. But we know that the production of this type of weaponry was reduced immensely in favor of offensive-type arms.

Secondly, one does not demolish his old house just to move the furniture to the new one, unless the old house is not needed. With weapons in the fortifications it is exactly the same.

Thirdly, pro-Communist historians hope that we do not remember the chronology of the events: Stalin started to demolish the old line in September 1939, and decided to build the new one only on June 26, 1940. They want us to believe that the cause came after its consequence.

The dates demonstrate that there was no connection between those two events, except for the fact that the Stalin Line was built for a defensive war and the Molotov Line was built for an aggressive war against Germany, as we shall show further on.

In comparison with the Stalin Line, the Molotov Line was a thin chain of rather light field strongholds that did not require much armament. For example, in the western special military district in Belorussia, there were 193 field strongholds built near the new border. The old one had 876 much more powerful ones. In other military districts, the ratios between the

newly built constructions and those destroyed earlier were even more astonishing.

The Molotov Line drastically differed from the Stalin Line in design and in detail. There were four main differences between the field strongholds torn down near the old borders and those created near the new ones: the Molotov Line was built so that the enemy could see it; it was built on secondary locations; it was not covered by a security pale, minefields, or other engineered obstacles; and the builders did not use many opportunities available to them to fortify the line, and did not rush to complete their work.

For example, such a secondary location was in the Brest area. There the border river was crossed at once by six railroad and automotive bridges. The main strategic direction of attack of the Germans was Warsaw-Brest-Minsk-Smolensk-Moscow. That's why the bridges of Brest had huge strategic value. But the new fortified region was built 27 km north of Brest where there were no bridges! The fortified regions of the Molotov Line were pushed to the very edge of the border. They were not covered by a security pale, and in case of sudden attack, the garrisons had no time to take firing positions and prepare their arms.¹⁵

Unlike the Stalin Line, the fortified regions of the Molotov Line had very little depth. All that could be built on the very edge of the border was built there. According to Lieutenant General V. F. Zotov, rear defenses were neither built nor planned.¹⁶ New fortifications weren't built on locations tactically valuable for defense, but along the state border, following its twists and bends. New military buildings were not defended by barbwire fences, mines, trenches, or tetrahedrons. There were no engineered obstacles in the construction area. The new constructions were not camouflaged.¹⁷

At the same time, the German generals were doing the same. Between 1932 and 1937, mighty field strongholds were built on the shores of the Oder River, shielding Germany from strikes from the east. These were first-rate military structures, blended with the landscape and brilliantly camouflaged. I will not describe them in detail, but they are a formidable example of the German preciseness, accuracy, and industriousness. Fortified regions in the area between the Oder and the Warta rivers could serve as examples of the highest achievement of military engineering of the early twentieth century.

As soon as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed in Moscow and the German army invaded Poland, the magnificent field strongholds near the old German border were abandoned and never again occupied by armies. Many field constructions were used for other purposes. For example, in the Hochwald region there was a powerful fortification ensemble, which included twenty-three four-story military constructions, connected by 30 km of underground tunnels. It was transformed into a factory for airplane motors. Having advanced and met with the Red Army in mid-Poland, the German troops began constructing a new line of fortified regions. They were built on secondary locations and pushed right up to the Soviet borders. In front of the new fortified regions, there were no minefields and no obstacles. The Germans worked night and day, and the Soviet border patrol saw that very clearly.¹⁸

German construction continued until May 1941, after which, to use Soviet language, "construction was rated as a second-class priority." Out of eighty military constructions planned to be built on the border river San, only seventeen were completed. They were all insufficiently camouflaged. Each of these constructions could be described as light compared to those on the old German-Polish border: relatively thin walls, and steel armor plates of just 100 mm. On the old borders, along the Oder line, they had used much stronger armor plates of up to 350 mm. Soviet officers later saw both German and Soviet LFPs on both sides of the

same river. If one showed photos of the LFPs to an expert and asked him to distinguish the German from the Soviet, he would be stumped. They were identical twins: when building the Molotov Line on the shores of the same river San, Soviet engineers also used relatively thin armor plates of 100 mm.

While their neighbor was weak Poland, German troops erected on their borders powerful fortifications; as soon as they crushed Poland and established a common border with the Soviet Union, the Germans abandoned the old fortifications, and built along the new borders, very slowly, only light defense structures. Just like the Red Army! That was because both sides did not plan to defend their new borders for long.

Fortification can be both defensive and offensive. If you are planning to attack, then you follow these rules during the construction of fortified regions:

- Gather attack groups of troops in the primary locations, leave secondary locations almost without troops and protect them with real fortified regions.
- In the primary locations, do not try to camouflage your fortifications; let the enemy think that you are preparing for defense.
- Everything that can be located right on the shores of border rivers should be located there: during your troops' advance across the river, these fortifications, placed right on the border, will support your advance with fire.
- Do not protect frontline fortifications with minefields and barbwire—they would hinder your own advancing troops.
- Do not waste a lot of cement and steel for frontline fortifications—you are not planning to sit in defensive positions for long.
- Do not build fortifications deep in your territory—they will be unnecessary.

These rules governed the actions of the Soviet and German generals from 1939. In August 1939, Zhukov brilliantly used these rules in Khalkhin-Gol: "With these actions, we strove to make the enemy believe in the absence of any sort of preparations for advance from our side, and to show that we [were] conducting widespread defensive works, and only for defense."¹⁹ The Japanese believed in Zhukov's "defensive" works and paid dearly for their folly. Later, on a much grander scale, Zhukov staged the same deception on the German border.

However, he did not fool the German generals. They had their own identical experience with Poland. On August 22, 1939, during the negotiations of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and preparations of the German army to invade Poland, General Guderian received an order to command the "fortification team of Pomerania." The goal was to calm the Poles by showing them strictly defensive preparations, while raising, with minimal effort, light fortifications.

In the spring and summer of 1941, Guderian again was building defenses, this time on the Soviet border. If Guderian built light concrete boxes near the border, it did not at all follow that he intended to defend himself. It meant exactly the opposite. And if Zhukov built identical boxes along the same borders, what did that mean?

The Stalin Line was universal: it could be used either for defense or for attack—the wide passages between the fortified regions were left intact to let through masses of troops advancing west. When the border was moved a few hundred kilometers west, the Stalin Line completely lost its use as a fortified launching ground for attack, and Stalin did not need it

for defense after he signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. As a result, the Stalin Line was disarmed and then dismantled: Stalin was not planning to fight on his territory. After Germany got bogged down in a war against Great Britain, Stalin no longer needed the fortified regions in the depths of Soviet territory.

Hitler faced the same situation, not only on his eastern borders but on the western ones as well. There, in the 1930s, he built the Siegfried Line. Traditionally, since the times of the Franco-Prussian War, a German attack on France was always planned in the north. The Siegfried Line was built to the south of that direction—in other words, on a secondary location—following the principle of attacking the primary and fortifying the secondary location. In 1940, the German army advanced far west, and the Siegfried Line became useless. At that time, Hitler had no idea that in four years he would have to defend his own borders again. The Siegfried Line was abandoned. Its new use was quite unusual—the military constructions were given to farmers for storing potatoes. Some of the military structures had their unbreakable armored doors locked from within; when someone wanted to get in, the keys were nowhere to be found.²⁰

We could, of course, call outstanding Soviet and German generals idiots. But stupidity is not the explanation here. Simply put, both sides were aggressors. Both were thinking in terms of attack, and when fortifications could no longer be used for invasion, they tore them down or put them to whatever use they saw fit.

Trotsky Murdered, Molotov in Berlin

Hitler will send his main forces west, and Moscow will want to use the advantages of her position.

—L. TROTSKY, JUNE 21, 1939

On August 21, 1940, in Mexico, Leon Trotsky was gruesomely murdered. An agent of the NKVD, Spanish Communist Ramon Mercader (also known as “Jacques Mornar Vandenrein” and “Ramon Ivanovich Lopez”) posed as an idealistic Trotskyite and penetrated Trotsky’s inner circle. Trotsky liked the essays Mercader wrote and the pleasant young admirer became a fixture at Trotsky’s home. On the day of the murder, the two of them were alone in Trotsky’s office. Trotsky was bent over his desk reading an article by Mercader when his guest pulled out an ice-pick from inside his trench coat and crushed Trotsky’s skull with a monstrous blow.

Mercader was arrested at the scene of the crime; but he refused to testify. The Mexican court sentenced him to twenty years in prison. On May 6, 1960, three months short of completing his term, he was released for good behavior. Mercader returned to the USSR and was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union with the “Golden Star,” and the highest governmental award, the Order of Lenin. He was given a position as a researcher at the Marxism-Leninism Institute of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union Communist Party. At that time, people joked that, after becoming a staff fellow at such a respectable academic institution, Mercader was writing a multi-volume dissertation on the topic of “Alternative Uses for Ice-Picks.”

Some said that Trotsky’s murder had no meaning, that Trotsky had few followers, lived in remote Mexico, and posed no threat. It was said that the murder was Stalin’s personal vendetta and a manifestation of his paranoia. But some ambiguities remained. Why was Trotsky in Mexico in the first place?

Trotsky reached the peak of his career in October 1917. Under his leadership, the Bolsheviks engineered the state coup and the takeover of Petrograd (St. Petersburg), the

former Russian capital. Trotsky was effectively the founder and leader of the Red Army during the entire Civil War. However, already during the Civil War, he was not the most important man. He shared the top powers with Lenin. Gradually, Trotsky was relegated to secondary roles. His slide from the top accelerated and turned into a rapid fall. By 1923, Trotsky was the head of a leftist opposition within the Communist party, meaning that he was in the minority. By 1927, Trotsky was ousted from all his posts and deprived of all duties and privileges. On November 7, 1927, Trotsky tried to give a speech in front of a column of demonstrators headed for Red Square, but he was pelted with empty bottles and stones. Killing Trotsky was not a challenge. There would have been plenty of volunteers. Why didn't Stalin kill Trotsky then?

In early 1928, Stalin exiled Trotsky to Kazakhstan. A year later, he sent Trotsky to Turkey. Again, we ask: what for? In Kazakhstan, Trotsky was completely isolated and fully monitored by Stalin's secret police. The Soviet Union's borders were hermetically sealed, and running out of the country was extremely difficult. For Trotsky, it would have been completely impossible, since he was under constant surveillance. He could not run away from Stalin. He did not even exhibit any desire to do so. As a political opponent, Trotsky was completely disarmed. He had no power strings, no influence, no money, and no means of communication. No one published anything he wrote. His letters were checked, detained for several months, and in most cases simply disappeared. Trotsky's followers were harshly persecuted. Monstrous beatings of Trotskyites in dark alleys were just the earliest and most modest manifestations of Stalin's aversion. Later on, there were exiles, prisons, torture, public trials, and executions. Millions disassociated themselves from Trotsky. Only a few individuals remained true to him.

Human nature is such that people befriend those who are rich and powerful, but when someone falls from the top to the bottom of the power ladder, the number of his friends and supporters falls drastically. Suddenly volunteers appear to kick yesterday's boss. Stalin exterminated millions whom he considered to be his enemies or potential enemies. Stalin sent his opponents to Siberia, to the Far East, to Kazakhstan, to Sakhalin and Kolyma, or directly to the execution cellars. Only one enemy, Trotsky, the most significant one, Stalin brought out of Kazakhstan and sent to the heavenly islands in Turkey's Sea of Marmara.

If Trotsky had been dangerous, Stalin could have isolated him the same way he isolated Lenin in the last years of his life.¹ Trotsky could have perished on the operating table, like Michael Frunze, who replaced Trotsky as the leader of the Red Army, in 1925. Trotsky could have drowned in a lake, like Efraim Skliansky, Trotsky's deputy commander of the Red Army during the Civil War, in 1925.

Stalin, at that time, had three secretaries: Bazhanov for "daylight operations," Mekhlis for "twilight" ones, and Grigoryi Kanner for "dark" operations. Bazhanov remembered that Michael Frunze had to be placed on the operating table by force; that was how much Stalin cared for the health of his buddy. Frunze was right to put up a fight. Death awaited him on the operating table. He must have guessed this. The arrangements for the operation were handled by Kanner. When the secretary for "daylight operations" Bazhanov heard about this, everything was clear to him.² Bazhanov described how he received news of Skliansky's puzzling death: "Mekhlis and I immediately went to Kanner and unanimously said: 'Grisha, it is you who drowned Skliansky.' Mekhlis and I were completely certain that Skliansky was

drowned on Stalin's orders, and the "accident" was organized by Kanner and Iagoda."³ By the way, Kanner was executed by a firing squad in 1937, Iagoda in 1938.

In Kazakhstan, Trotsky could not publish anything. By letting Trotsky go free, Stalin gave him the opportunity to say and write anything he wanted, including the most horrible things about Stalin. Why did Stalin postpone Trotsky's murder for so long? In the 1930s, Stalin accused all his enemies in the country of being Trotskyites. Trotskyites and those who were branded Trotskyites were executed by the thousands or sent to the camps by the thousands. Meanwhile, Trotsky himself was free. He lived on islands of fantastic beauty in Turkey, then in the south of France, in Norway, and finally in Mexico. Then, all of a sudden, the hunt for Trotsky began. There were several assassination attempts until the successful blow with the ice-pick.

Did Stalin's paranoia increase? No. On the eve and at the very beginning of World War II, Trotsky presented a clear and imminent danger not only to Stalin, but to the entire Soviet leadership. Trotsky fanatically supported the World Revolution. Once he realized that it had failed in Germany and throughout the world he warned that Soviet Russia could not survive encircled by capitalist states. The only hope was to turn Soviet Russia into a military camp and use its forces to aid revolutions whenever and wherever an opportunity appeared. Stalin insisted that Trotsky was wrong and the Soviet Union first had to build "Socialism in One Country." The Soviet Union would not export revolution. Then Stalin took more radical measures than Trotsky had proposed to turn the Soviet Union into a military camp. He carried out forced collectivization and industrialization, and built the GULAG camps for forced labor. Under Stalin the Soviet Union became an industrial power and the military base for World Revolution. Summing up, Trotsky loudly called for the World Communist Revolution. Stalin acted to achieve the same goal, but said that Trotsky's slogans were wrong.

Stalin's rhetoric was successful and duped Trotsky, who thought he was exposing Stalin when he declared to the world that Stalin had betrayed the cause of Communism and World Revolution. Trotsky did not understand that criticism was necessary for Stalin and was part of his plan. With his accusations, Trotsky dulled the fears of the West that Stalin would pursue World Revolution. Trotsky claimed that there was no reason to fear Stalin, that Stalin was "the greatest mediocrity in power," and that his regime would implode from within. "Stalin's personal dictatorship clearly nears its sunset," Trotsky said in November 1931.⁴ Thus, with Trotsky's dubious endorsement, the West helped Stalin to create a powerful military industry, and to prepare his country and army to crush Western civilization.

Trotsky's opinion had credibility for Western politicians; after all, he had played a key role in the revolution, the Civil War, and the establishment of the Red Army. Trotsky launched the World Revolution, but he lost power. Stalin, if one believed Trotsky, was not instigating revolution but building socialism in one country, the Soviet Union. Stalin let Trotsky leave the Soviet Union and provided him with publicity around the world. Contact with Trotsky was a standard accusation against so called "enemies of the people" at every political trial in Moscow. Stalin could have called his enemies any number of names, but he stubbornly called them Trotskyites, giving Trotsky additional political weight. If Trotsky had asserted the opposite, if he had said that Stalin was preparing for aggression, if he had warned the West of the dangers of Stalin's malice, he would have been murdered as early as 1927.

Gradually, Trotsky sensed Stalin's true intentions. He stopped writing that Stalin had betrayed the cause of the World Revolution and started writing that Hitler had come to

power with Stalin's help. "Without Stalin, there would be no Hitler," said Trotsky. "Hitler was preparing for war. . . . The strike against the West in the near or far future could only be realized in the conditions of a military alliance between Fascist Germany and Stalin."⁵

On September 4, 1939, Trotsky reminded the world that "the Kremlin had fed oil to the Italian campaign into Abyssinia," and now it fed oil to Hitler's war against Europe. Trotsky asked why the pact of non-aggression between the Soviet Union and Germany had turned into war. "Is it unclear why Hitler began the advance on Poland immediately after the embraces between Ribbentrop and Molotov? Stalin knew very well what he was doing. For an attack against Poland and a war against England and France, Hitler needed favorable "neutrality" from the USSR, plus Soviet raw materials. The political and economic agreement provides Hitler with one and the other."⁶

At that point Trotsky stopped being useful to Stalin, and Stalin decided to get rid of him. Moreover, Trotsky had become dangerous. He warned Great Britain and France that the root of all evil was not Hitler, but Stalin. Without Stalin's "neutrality" toward Hitler, without Soviet petroleum, chrome, tin, nickel, platinum, iron ore, cotton, grain, manganese, copper, vanadium, molybdenum, and tungsten, Hitler could not have unleashed the war in Europe. But Trotsky warned Hitler as well. Back in June 1939, when very few people in the world had any idea that in a couple of months World War II would start, Trotsky exhibited amazing foresight when he wrote: "Hitler is going to strike to the west with his main forces and Moscow will be eager to fully take advantage of the situation."

Trotsky's predictions began to come true. In May 1940, Hitler invaded Belgium, the Netherlands, and France, and Stalin fully exploited the situation. On November 12, 1940, Soviet foreign minister Molotov arrived in Berlin and presented to Hitler a long list of territorial claims on behalf of the Soviet Union. These demands were repeated on November 25, 1940, when the Soviet Union proposed a peace pact between Germany, Italy, Japan, and the USSR. The Soviet Union demanded:

- from Finland: Pechenga, the only Finnish port on the Barents Sea, and Porkkala-Udd, the strategically located peninsula on the Baltic Sea controlling the entrance to the Gulf of Finland;
- naval bases on the Danish side of the straits of Kattegat and Skagerrak, controlling access to the North Sea and to the Baltic Sea;
- from Yugoslavia: a naval base on the Adriatic Sea;
- from Greece: a naval base in the Greek port of Thessaloniki;
- from Romania: the province of Southern Bukovina, a strategic foothold in the Carpathian Mountains to control access to the Ploesti oil fields;
- from Bulgaria: a pact of alliance with the Soviet Union including Bulgaria in the Soviet sphere of influence;
- from Turkey: bases in the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits;
- from Iran: bases in the Persian Gulf;
- the transfer of territories south of the Baku-Batumi line (in eastern Turkey, north of Iraq and Iran) to the Soviet sphere of influence;
- from Japan: the renunciation of its oil concessions in the province of Northern Sakhalin.

Hitler and his officials were dumbfounded by such extraordinary demands and did not respond.

On November 13, 1940, Molotov asked Stalin for instructions “about China, Turkey, and our interests regarding the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea.”⁷ Stalin advised Molotov: “Do not expose our interest in Persia. . . . If the Germans suggest a division of Turkey, you can show our cards.”⁸ In this correspondence, Stalin “suggested” to Molotov to obtain Germany’s consent for another self-serving step to be taken by the Soviet Union. He told Molotov to advise Hitler that the Soviet proposal for an alliance with the Axis powers would “not be possible without a guarantee of our control of Bulgaria and the passage of our troops into Bulgaria.”

In November 1940, Germany was in a difficult position. World War II had been going on for more than a year, and no end was in sight. Germany could win only in a quick war. On the evening of November 13, during talks between Hitler and Molotov, the British air force bombed Berlin. The meeting that had started in a luxurious reception room ended in an underground bomb shelter. With the air raid, Churchill showed Hitler and Molotov that Great Britain did not plan to surrender.

For a drawn-out war, Hitler needed tremendous quantities of strategic raw materials, which Stalin could provide. During the meeting, Molotov repeatedly reminded Hitler that without Soviet raw materials German victories in Europe would have been impossible: “The current status would not have been achieved without the influence of the German-Russian agreement [of August 1939] on the great German victories.”⁹ “As far as Germany is concerned, these [1939] agreements secured a safe rear for Germany and played a major role in the development of a military campaign in the West, including France’s defeat.”¹⁰ “Germany, not without the help of the pact with the USSR, was able so quickly and with military glory to execute its operations in Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Holland, and France.”¹¹

Stalin twisted Hitler’s arms. Trotsky predicted that Stalin “would want to fully use the advantage of his position.” That was precisely what Stalin did. Hitler told Molotov that Germany had conquered so much territory in one year of war that it would need a hundred years to develop it. He offered: if space was needed, Germany and the Soviet Union could both move to the south of their borders. Molotov agreed with the proposal, but added that they had to discuss the issue of the Danish straits Store Bælt and Lille Bælt, as well as the straits between Denmark and Sweden and Norway, Sund, Kattegat, and Skagerrak. For the Germans, these straits were a strategic necessity, since they already occupied Denmark. Why would the Soviet Union need them?

Hitler told Molotov: “While the war is going on, Germany is extremely interested in receiving nickel and timber from Finland.” Hitler wanted to know whether the Soviet Union was preparing a war against Finland. If so, could it be postponed to a later date? Molotov answered that Finland was in the Soviet sphere of influence and that Germany had to remove its troops from Finland. Molotov “did not understand why Russia had to postpone the realization of its plans by six months or even a year. After all, the German-Russian pact did not contain any time limits and within their respective spheres of influence neither of the countries had its hands tied.”¹²

The Soviet Union had enough oil for both internal consumption and export. The Soviet Union did not need Romanian oil, while Hitler talked about Germany’s complete dependency on Romanian petroleum, asserting that Germany would defend the Romanian oil industry

at any cost. Hitler hinted that the Soviet Union should move away from Romanian oil. The Soviet Union had already taken over Northern Bukovina. With that invasion, the Soviet Union violated the pact about the division of the spheres of influence. Molotov replied that the Soviet Union did indeed take something from Romania, and did indeed violate the previously reached agreement with Germany. But the Soviet Union would not give up what it got; moreover, Stalin wanted Southern Bukovina and Bulgaria. "The fate of Romania and Hungary also interests the Soviet Union, and under no condition can it ever be indifferent to it."¹³

Hitler reminded Molotov that they had agreed about the division of Europe back in August 1939. Molotov responded that it was time for a new division of Europe that would give an advantage to the Soviet Union. "The USSR considers last year's agreement fulfilled, with the exception of the question of Finland. . . . Now it is time to talk about a broader agreement between the USSR and Germany."¹⁴ Further discussions were in the same tone.

During the course of the talks, Molotov did not raise questions about the security of the Soviet Union. Hitler brought up questions of safety from a Soviet invasion of territory crucial to Germany, but he did not receive any satisfactory reply. On the morning of November 14, 1940, Molotov left for Moscow. On November 25, the German ambassador to Moscow was told that Germany had to withdraw its troops from Finnish territory immediately. In addition, all the claims Molotov had made in his talks with Hitler and Ribbentrop were confirmed, even the demand to create Soviet bases on the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits.¹⁵ On the same day, November 25, 1940, the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, Marshal of the Soviet Union S. K. Timoshenko, and the Chief of General Staff of the Red Army, General K. A. Meretskov, wrote a directive to prepare a plan for a new war of aggression against Finland.¹⁶

Hitler was preparing for a big war against Great Britain when Stalin demanded new territories in Europe—territories on which Germany's economy and armed forces depended completely. If a war against Britain weakened Germany, what would Stalin demand? Hitler found an answer to all of Stalin's demands. "After Molotov's departure, Hitler gathered his most trusted subordinates and clearly let them understand that he planned to invade Russia."¹⁷

Kremlin Games

The use of new means of struggle and new attack tactics has great value for our success. Before the enemy finds a means of countering the advance, the attacker can make use of all the advantages given by the element of surprise.

—GENERAL G. K. ZHUKOV, LECTURE GIVEN AT A CONFERENCE OF
THE HIGH COMMAND OF THE RED ARMY, DECEMBER 26, 1940

A conference of the High Command of the Red Army began on December 23, 1940. It lasted nine days and ended on the evening of December 31. The highest-ranking leaders of the Red Army—274 marshals, generals, and admirals—attended.

The conference was convened in utmost secrecy. The generals arrived in Moscow in closed railroad cars or in military airplanes. They were met in remote places, and in closed cars they were delivered to the inner courtyard of “Hotel Moscow.” The generals arriving in Moscow from other places were forbidden to go into the city. The newspapers of military districts continued to print the portraits of their commanders and reports about their daily activities, creating the impression that they were not in Moscow but at their posts. Before the start of the conference, the generals were led into buses in the hotel’s inner courtyard and driven to the General Staff building. At the end of the day, they were returned to the hotel in the same fashion. Understandably, the hotel itself was “cleared of outside elements” and placed under special security and surveillance.

Zhukov delivered the first and most important lecture on new tactics of sudden attack. Furthermore, most of the other speakers discussed only that subject. For example, Lieutenant General P. S. Klenov, Chief of Staff of the Baltic special military district, who spoke following Zhukov’s lecture, talked about special operations: “These will be operations of the starting phase, when the enemy’s armies have not yet completed their concentration and are not prepared for deployment. These are operations of invasion, for carrying out a whole chain of special tasks. . . . This is use of large air and, perhaps, mechanized forces, while the enemy has

not yet prepared for decisive action. . . . The mechanized forces will have to be used independently, and they will solve the tasks of invasion into enemy territory.”¹

The title of the second (and very important) lecture was “The Air Force in an Offensive Operation and the Struggle for Air Superiority.” The lecturer was Lieutenant General P. V. Rychagov, Chief of the Air Force Main Directorate of the Red Army. Zhukov described the lecture as “very informative.”² We had to wait another half a century, until the demise of the Soviet Union, for the publication of the conference records. The essence of the “very informative lecture” boiled down to this: “The best means of defeating [an] air force on the ground is a simultaneous strike at a large number of air bases where the enemy’s aviation is possibly located.”³

Colonel General of Tank Troops D. G. Pavlov, commander of the Western special military district, delivered the lecture titled “The use of mechanized units in contemporary offensive operations and breakthrough by mechanized corps.” Pavlov said: “Poland has ceased to exist after seventeen days. The operation in Belgium and Holland ended after fifteen days. The operation in France, before France’s capitulation, lasted seventeen days. These are three very characteristic numbers, which cannot but force me to accept them as a possible number for our calculations of our offensive operation.”⁴

At that time, according to the Soviet Field Statute, the line of defense for a division was eight to twelve kilometers wide. The lecturers at the conference unanimously advocated a widening of that line. That regulation meant a very high density of troops for defense lines. Why put so many troops on the defensive, confining them to sitting without use, when those troops were needed on the offensive? Other possibilities were examined as well, including concentrating all the forces in those locations where the Soviet Union would carry out sudden strikes against Germany, leaving secondary locations defenseless with a completely bare border in those places. This theory was supported by the Chief of Staff of the Leningrad military district, Major General P. G. Ponedelin. When, a month after the conference, Zhukov became the Chief of General Staff of the Red Army he did not forget Ponedelin, who advocated the baring of the front. Zhukov offered Ponedelin a post in a primary location: Ponedelin became commander of the 12th Army in the Lvov-Chernovitsi bulge. Ponedelin acted in the interests of an offensive: all force was concentrated in the “hitting fist” and the border was left bare. In the summer of 1941, Ponedelin’s 12th Army, as well as all Soviet troops of the 1st Strategic Echelon, was crushed. Ponedelin himself was taken prisoner. After the war, he was brought to Moscow under guard, tried, and executed.

The lecture titled “The Character of Contemporary Defensive Operations” was given by General of the Army I. V. Tulenev, commander of the Moscow military district. So, the questions dealing with defense were examined after all! Here is what Tulenev had to say in his lecture: “We have no established contemporary defense theory.”⁵ This was the truth. Until December 1940, Soviet military theory did not work on questions of defense. After December, it did not work on them either. Tulenev said that such a theory was unnecessary. The Soviet Union would defend itself, but only in separate secondary locations. The goal was to conduct grandiose sudden offensive operations on enemy territory, and therefore to amass huge forces in narrow areas. The Soviet Union had to take almost all forces out of secondary locations; it would defend itself in the bare areas. Tulenev expressed the thought that

nobody disputed: “Defense will be a part of a general offensive. Defense is an indispensable form of military operations in separate secondary locations, which allows us to save forces for offensive operations and prepare attacks.”⁶

In the conclusive speech, the People’s Commissar of Defense, Marshal of the Soviet Union Timoshenko reminded his audience to keep in mind “the possibility of the simultaneous conduct of two, maybe even three, offensive operations on different fronts in the theater of war, with the purpose of strategically shaking up the enemy’s defense capabilities as widely as possible.”⁷ Defense at the primary locations was not foreseen, even theoretically. An opinion, which was prevalent in the Red Army from the moment of its founding, was confirmed at that conference: the most important thing was to advance with entire armies, fronts, and groups of fronts; but small formations—regiments or divisions, perhaps even a corps—would sometimes be left for defense in separate locations. Some agreed that if needed, an entire field army could be engaged in defense. . . . We must remember that in June 1941, on the European territory of the USSR, there were twenty-six field armies organized in five fronts, and a group of reserve armies. A situation in which two armies, side by side, could occupy themselves with defense in one location, was considered completely improbable, and was not examined even theoretically.

The conference of the High Command of the Red Army ended at 6 PM on December 31, 1940. Most of the participants were urgently and secretly sent back to their posts. Only the most important generals remained in Moscow. Even before the conference was over, at 11 AM on December 31, a group of forty-nine of the highest-ranking generals received instructions for a strategic staff game on maps. The maps denoted battles between the “Easterners” and “Westerners.” The scope and importance of this game was the largest of all the pre-war years.⁸ Pavlov, the Commander of the Western special military district, commanded the “Easterners,” or the Soviet troops. Zhukov, Commander of the Kiev special military district, led the “Westerners,” meaning the German troops.

Pavlov’s group had twenty-four generals, one rear-admiral, one navy captain of the first rank, one navy captain of the second rank, and one colonel. Zhukov’s group, which played the role of the German command, had twenty generals, admirals, and officers besides Zhukov. The first strategic game began on the morning of January 2, 1941, at the General Staff of the Red Army. The scenario of the future war was being played out. The supervisor of the game was Timoshenko, the People’s Commissar of Defense of the USSR. The referees of the game consisted of twelve top commanders of the Red Army, including four Marshals of the Soviet Union. The observers included Joseph Stalin and the entire Politburo.

A colossal battle raged on the giant maps. For the time being just on the maps, the two most powerful armies on the planet clashed. For several days and nights, without rest or sleep, the staffs of the two opposing sides evaluated situations, made decisions, gave orders and directions. For now just on paper, thousands of tanks and airplanes, tens of thousands of guns and mortars, and millions of soldiers were brought into battle. Hundreds of thousands of tons of ammunition, fuel, and engineering and medical equipment were dispatched from the rear. Divisions, corps, and entire armies were going for the breakthrough. Soviet strategists were not working on any defense plans and not making any plans for rebutting a possible German aggression. They were thinking of a way to take Koenigsberg, Warsaw, Prague, Bucharest, Krakow, and Budapest. Soviet preparations for the invasion of Europe neared their final stage.

The game was called “Offensive Operation of the Front with Breaks through the Fortified Regions.” The theme was not simply an attack, but an attack on Germany and more precisely on Eastern Prussia, which was defended by a line of fortified regions. The attacker was the Soviet troops on the northwestern front, under Pavlov’s leadership. Pavlov delivered the blow to Eastern Prussia, to Königsberg, and Zhukov defended it.

The Communist leaders openly said that the war would be conducted only on enemy territory, as the popular Soviet antebellum song said: “And on enemy land we will crush the enemy, shedding little [of our] blood and by a powerful blow.” They had in mind a “deep penetration,” that is, a blitzkrieg. But this frankness always followed the condition that the enemy would force us into war. The Field Statute clearly stated that if the enemy attacked, the Red Army would transform itself into the most ferocious attacker of any aggressive armies.

It happened that Germany attacked precisely when the Red Army had everything ready to invade it. In November 1939, Stalin concentrated five armies on the Finnish border, got them ready, and then the Finns, as if on command, supposedly fired several cannon shells. Soviet newspapers exploded with rage: “We will repel the Finnish invasion!” “We will respond to the aggressor’s blow with a threefold one!” “We will destroy the band of pests!”

Preparations for attacking Germany followed the same rules. Stalin’s strategists, with a mysterious smile on their lips, said that if the enemy forced them into war, they would have to retaliate on enemy territory.

The tasks for the strategy game were designed according to that principle:

1. On July 15, 1941, Germany attacks the Soviet Union.
2. German troops force their way 70 to 120 km into Soviet territory, but . . .
3. . . . by August 1, 1941, they are thrown back to their original positions.⁹

The scenarios of how the “Westerners” attacked, how the Soviet army managed to throw them back and get them off Soviet territory, were not played in the game. It was just mentioned that the Germans attacked and then the Red Army drove them back to the state border. The strategic game began precisely then, when there were no enemy troops on the Soviet soil. The “retaliatory actions” of the Red Army in Eastern Prussia began from that point. The German invasion of Soviet territory and the repelling of aggression did not interest Stalin, Zhukov, and the rest. They were interested in the conduct of assault operations from the border. The leadership concluded that “unfolding the main forces of the Red Army in the West and grouping the main forces against Eastern Prussia and in the direction of Warsaw brings about serious fears that the struggle on this front can turn into protracted fighting.”¹⁰

Afterward, they played a second strategic game, but the main idea did not change: the Red Army was still the advancing side. Actually, the game started when the “Easterners” were one hundred kilometers inside the land of the “Westerners.”

The actions of German and Soviet generals were almost mirror images of each other. One month earlier, the Germans played the same games. The gap in time between the actions of Soviet and German commanders was slowly decreasing. On November 29, 1940, a large strategic game on maps began in Berlin. The supervisor of the game was Major General Friedrich Paulus, the First *Ober-Kwartirmeister* of the General Staff of the Ground Forces. In Moscow, there had been two games, in Berlin only one, but it was divided into three stages: first, the invasion by German troops of Russian territory, and battles on the border; second,

the German advance to the Minsk-Kiev Line; third, the conclusion of the war and destruction of the Red Army's last reserves, if such were found to the east of the Minsk-Kiev Line. The Germans didn't work out how they would reach Kursk, Moscow, and Stalingrad. The generals thought that one blow would bring down the entire Soviet Union and send the Red Army on the run. In Berlin, a debriefing followed each stage of the game. The main debriefing of all stages of the game ended on December 13, 1940. Nineteen days later, the strategic games in Moscow began, the second of which, as we know now, ended on January 11, 1941.

History is written by the victors. The Red Army seized the archives of the *Wehrmacht Heer*, and Soviet historians demonstrated the aggressiveness of German imperialism to the rest of the world, exposing their terrible plans. Meanwhile, Soviet archives were carefully locked. This gave the Communist propagandists and agitators the opportunity to say that Soviet generals, admirals, marshals, and Stalin himself suffered from a chronic love of peace.¹¹ However, that love of peace was only pretence. The Soviet generals did not sleep. Like their German peers, they prepared an invasion.

Of the two Soviet games, the first one was decisive. "The debriefing of the first one is concluded at the highest political leadership level in the country."¹² The "highest political leadership in the country" meant, of course, Stalin. He carefully followed the course of the first game and became convinced that the army would get bogged down in Eastern Prussia. Therefore, immediately after the first game, Stalin decided that a strike on Europe should be delivered from Ukraine and Moldova, and not from an area north of Polesye.

The second game, which dealt with "retaliatory measures" of the Red Army in Germany, Hungary, and Romania, took place between January 8 and 11, 1941. There were insignificant changes in each group of players. Certain generals were switched from side to side. A number of generals did not participate in the second game at all, others replaced them. But the main opponents remained the same. Only this time, Zhukov commanded the Soviet troops and directed the "retaliatory blow" on enemy territory, whereas Pavlov commanded the German and Romanian troops and tried to repel the Soviet advance. Why did they need to conduct two games?

Polesye—the biggest region of swamplands in Europe, possibly even in the world—lies between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. Polesye was unsuitable for the mass movement of troops and the conduct of military operations. The area divided the western theater of operations into two strategic directions. If one tried to be equally strong to the north and to the south of Polesye, then one had to simply divide one's forces in two. However, the main principle of strategy was concentration. The drive to be strong everywhere causes the dissipation of forces and general weakness. Therefore, forces had to be concentrated in one of the two directions to deliver the decisive blow, while in the other direction they delivered just a secondary, auxiliary attack.

The question then was which direction should be considered primary and which secondary. The arguments about this did not end. Both options had their pros and cons. Invasion into Central Europe, north of Polesye, would be a direct blow on Berlin. However, in the attacker's way lay heavily fortified Eastern Prussia and Koenigsberg. A blow to the south, however, was a diversion to the side, a roundabout route. However, it would be a blow to almost unprotected Romania, the oil heart of Germany. On synthetic fuel alone, Germany could not survive. Therefore, it was decided to play two games, compare the results, and make the choice. In the first game, the main attack on Central Europe was carried out north of Polesye, from Belarus and the Baltic.

In the second game, the invasion was carried out from Ukraine and Moldova. If Germany were crushed, the rest of continental Europe would shower Stalin with flowers and his tanks would have an open road right up to the Atlantic Ocean.

In the second game, Zhukov, in command of Soviet troops, attacked Romania and Hungary. He found it easy to advance. First of all, there were no modern fortifications there, like those in Eastern Prussia. Zhukov had indisputable superiority of aviation, tanks, and paratroops. "The second game . . . ended with the 'Eastern' decision being made to attack Budapest." Zhukov commanded the "Eastern" group in the second game, and it was he who made the decisions about breaking through to Lake Balaton and crossing the Danube River near Budapest. The decision so far was only made in the course of a strategy game, but Zhukov himself already said that the games did not have an academic character, but were directly tied to the imminent war. Stalin was not present at the second game and did not conduct its debriefings, because he had already made his choice after seeing the results of the first one. The Soviet invasion of Europe would be conducted south of Polesye.

All the Way to Berlin!

The peasant-worker Red Army will be the most aggressive of any attack army that ever existed.

—FIELD STATUTE OF THE RED ARMY, 1939

By sending all his divisions to France, Hitler had turned his back on Stalin. Stalin then feverishly destroyed his defenses and increased the attacking power of the Red Army. The Dnepr military flotilla was one of the many defense systems of the Soviet Union. The great river Dnepr blocked the way into the depth of Soviet territory to aggressors from the west. All the Dnepr bridges were mined before 1939, and they could be demolished in such a way that nothing would be left to restore. In all preceding campaigns, German troops had never had to cross a single water barrier equal to the Dnepr. The pressing of a few buttons, at least in the middle and lower Dnepr regions, could stop German tank units. In the early 1930s, the Dnepr military flotilla was created to prevent the crossing and establishment of temporary bridges across the river. By the beginning of World War II, the flotilla counted 120 warships and motorboats, including eight powerful coastal monitors with cannon up to 130 mm.¹ On top of that, the Dnepr flotilla had its own air force, and shoreline and air-defense batteries. The left bank of the Dnepr was suitable for river warships: it had many islands, bypasses, and backwater hideaways, which allowed warships, including the largest ones, to hide from the enemy and carry out surprise attacks, preventing the enemy from crossing the river.

The Dnepr water barrier—with its bridges primed for demolition and the river flotilla that could act together with field troops, artillery, and aviation—could securely close off the roads to the industrial regions in the south of Ukraine and to the Black Sea bases of the Soviet Navy. The German *blitzkrieg* could be stopped on the Dnepr line, or at least be held up for several months. If that had happened, the entire course of the war would have been different. However, just when Hitler turned his back on Stalin, Stalin ordered the removal of mines from the Dnepr bridges and the disbanding of the military flotilla. The Dnepr flotilla could

be used only on the territory of the Soviet Union and only in a defensive war. It was obvious why Stalin believed he did not need it.

Stalin divided the defensive Dnepr flotilla into two: the Danube flotilla and the Pinsk flotilla. In the summer of 1940, Stalin tore Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia from Romania. The Soviet Union received an area of several tens of kilometers on the eastern shore of the Danube River. The Danube flotilla, formed in advance, was immediately transferred to this area. It was not easy to transfer the ships from the Dnepr: small ships were sent by railroad, and large ones sailed in the Black Sea during quiet weather and with special precautions. The Danube military flotilla included sixty-three river warships and motorboats, among them five monitors and twenty-two armored motorboats, plus air force units, and anti-aircraft and shoreline artillery.² The location of the flotilla was horrible. The Soviet shore of the Danube was bare and open. Ships were stationed at the banks, while Romanian troops stood nearby, sometimes three hundred meters from the Soviet ships. In the event of a defensive war, the entire Danube flotilla would fall into a trap from the beginning: there was nowhere to retreat from the Danube delta but to the Black Sea, the waves of which could sink the ships built for river. The flotilla had nowhere to maneuver. A surprise attack from the enemy would have meant machine-gun fire at the Soviet ships, not giving them the possibility to lift anchor and detach the mooring lines. Moreover, no enemy would invade the Soviet Union through the Danube delta, since it consisted of hundreds of lakes and impassable swamps. This means that the Danube flotilla was not needed to defend the newly “liberated” lands of Bessarabia.

There was only one possible action for the Danube flotilla: in the course of a general invasion by the troops of the Red Army, the flotilla could carry out operations up the river. If you amassed in the delta of a great river more than sixty river warships, they would have nowhere to go except up the stream. There were no other directions. If it sailed up the Danube, the flotilla would have to fight on Romanian, Bulgarian, Yugoslavian, Hungarian, Slovak, Austrian, and German territory.

In a defensive war, the Danube flotilla would be useless, and it would be sentenced to immediate destruction at its open bases on the shores. But in a war of aggression, the Danube flotilla was deadly for Germany: it only had to sail three to four hundred kilometers up the river, and the strategically important bridge at Chernavoda would be within firing range of its cannon, which meant that the petroleum supply from Ploiești to the port of Constanza would be disrupted. Another hundred kilometers upstream, and the entire German war machine would stop, simply because German tanks, planes, and warships would be out of fuel.

Here is an interesting detail: several mobile shoreline batteries of the Danube flotilla were armed with 130-mm- and 152-mm-caliber cannon. If the Soviet command had truly decided that someone would try to invade the USSR through the Danube delta, the shoreline batteries should immediately have been dug into the ground, and at the first chance reinforced concrete caponiers should have been built. But no one built any caponiers, so the cannon remained mobile. Their mobility could only be used in aggressive operations: the mobile batteries could accompany the flotilla, moving along the shorelines and supporting the warships with fire.

The reaction of the Danube military flotilla's commanders to the beginning of the Soviet-German war was surprising. The word “war” meant to Soviet commanders invasion,

not defense. Having learned that the war had begun, the Soviet commanders finished their last preparations for landing operations. The actions of the Soviet flotilla commanders, as well as those of the 14th Rifle Corps, divisions of which were concentrated in the Danube delta region, and of the 79th Border Unit of the NKVD, were planned beforehand and meticulously worked out.

On June 25, 1941, the warships of the Danube flotilla, under cover of fire from the shoreline batteries, landed reconnaissance and sabotage units of the NKVD on the Romanian shores, followed by regiments from the 51st Rifle Division of the 14th Rifle Corps. Soviet soldiers acted decisively, boldly, and quickly. The complicated operation, which involved river ships and aviation, as well as field, shoreline, and ship artillery, units of the Red Army and the NKVD, was worked out with immaculate precision. On the morning of June 26, 1941, a red flag went up above the central church of the Romanian city of Kilia. A key springboard area of seventy kilometers of Romanian territory had fallen into Soviet hands. The Danube flotilla was preparing for further invasion operations up the Danube. To aid the flotilla, the 3rd Paratroops Corps stationed in the Odessa district could be sent out. But all this had to be cancelled, because on other areas of the front the Red Army was retreating; an order to retreat was issued to the Danube flotilla as well. With the Black Sea behind it, the Danube military flotilla found itself cut off from Soviet troops without the possibility of retreat. Most of its ships had to be sunk, while gigantic supplies, stored toward the movement of the flotilla up the river, had to be burned, or simply left behind.

Hitler and Stalin both understood perfectly well what the expression “oil is the blood of war” meant. Colonel General A. Jodl testified that, in an argument with Guderian, Hitler declared: “You want to invade without oil—well, we shall see what comes out of this.” As early as 1927, Stalin took seriously the problems of the impending World War II. On December 3, 1927, he said: “It is impossible to fight without oil, and he who has the advantage in terms of oil has the chance of victory in the impending war.”³ In June 1940, when nobody was threatening the Soviet Union, tens of Soviet river military ships appeared in the Danube delta. That step had no defensive value, but was a threat to the unprotected Romanian oil routes and consequently a deadly threat to Germany.

In July 1940, Hitler conducted intensive consultations with his generals and concluded that it was not at all easy to defend Romania: the supply routes extended all over and passed through the mountains. If a huge number of German troops were transferred to defend Romania, western Poland and eastern Germany, including Berlin, would be exposed to a Soviet attack. If a lot of troops were concentrated in Romania and tried to keep it at any cost, it would not help: the territory perhaps would be retained, but oil fields would still burn up from bombings and artillery fire.

In July 1940, Hitler for the first time said that the Soviet Union could be dangerous, especially if German troops left the continent for the British Isles and Africa. On November 13, 1940, in a conversation with Molotov, Hitler indicated the necessity to retain a huge number of German troops in Romania, obviously hinting that the Soviet military posed a threat to Romanian oil.⁴ Molotov ignored the hint. After Molotov's departure in December, Hitler issued a directive for the preparation of Operation Barbarossa.

In June 1940, when the German army was fighting in France, Zhukov, on Stalin's orders and without consulting the German allies, brought river warships to the Danube delta. Hitler asked the head of the Soviet government to divert the Soviet threat from the oil heart of Germany. Stalin and Molotov refused.

A fortnight after Hitler's invasion of the USSR, on July 7, 1941, Stalin sent a telegram to the commander of the southern front, General I. V. Tulenev. In the telegram, Stalin demanded that the Soviet Union retain Bessarabia at any cost, "having in mind that we need the Bessarabian territory as a springboard for organizing our invasion."⁵ Hitler had already delivered his sudden blow, but Stalin still did not think of defense—his main concern was organizing an invasion from Bessarabia, meaning an attack on the Romanian oil fields.

The invasion of Bessarabia by the Soviet Union and the concentration there of powerful aggressive forces, including the paratroops corps and the Danube flotilla, forced Hitler to look at the strategic situation from a completely different perspective and to take preemptive measures. But it was already too late. Even the sudden attack of the *Wehrmacht Heer* on the Soviet Union could not save Hitler and his empire.

In the memoirs of Marshal of the Soviet Union G. K. Zhukov, there is a map of the location of Soviet naval bases in the first half of 1941. Among these bases, one was in the vicinity of the city of Pinsk, in Belarus.⁶ It is at least five hundred kilometers away from the nearest sea. After the disbanding of the purely defensive Dnepr military flotilla, some part of its ships were sent to the Danube delta, and others were sent upstream to the tributary of the Dnepr—the river Pripyat'. Ships were sent up almost to the sources, where the width of the river hardly reached fifty meters. That was where a new base for the flotilla was built.

The Pinsk military flotilla almost rivaled the Danube flotilla in might—it included four 263-ton displacement *Zhelezniakov*-class monitors and five captured Polish monitors, ranging from 130- to 150-ton displacement. Altogether, the Pinsk flotilla had sixty-six river warships and cutters, a squadron of airplanes, a company of marines, and other units.⁷ It was difficult to use the Pinsk flotilla for defense: the coastal monitors that came here had their bows turned west, and turning such huge ships around in a narrow river was complicated. If the ships were needed for defense, they should have been left in the Dnepr, because there was nothing for them to do on the quiet forest river Pripyat'. It was unlikely that the enemy would advance through the impassable forests and treacherous swamps.

The purpose of the Pinsk flotilla remains unclear, if one does not think of the Dnepr-Bug Canal.

Immediately after the "liberation" of Western Belarus in 1939, the Red Army started digging a more than 100-km-long canal from Pinsk to Kobrin.⁸ The canal was built in the summer and winter. Sapper units of the 4th Army and "construction units of the NKVD"—that is, thousands of inmates from the GULAG—participated in its completion. The fact that the construction was commanded by Colonel (later Marshal of Engineering Troops) Alexey Proshliakov alone spoke of its purely military purpose. The canal was built in truly horrendous conditions. Equipment sank in the swamps, and the only way to complete the canal within the deadline set by Stalin was to do everything by hand. The canal was built. Nobody knows exactly how many human lives it cost. The canal connected the Pripyat' with the river Bug. The only use for the canal could be to let ships reach to the Vistula basin and further west. The canal had no other use. In a defensive war, it would have had to be destroyed to prevent German river ships from passing through the Vistula to the Dnepr. In the defensive war of 1941, all the ships of the Pinsk flotilla had to be blown up and abandoned. At the end of 1943, when the Red Army was rapidly advancing west, a flotilla was once again formed on the Dnepr, and once again it went up the Pripyat' River to the small river Mukhavets, which flowed into the Bug.

Admiral V. Grigoryev, who in 1943 received the new flotilla in the Kiev region, remembered the words of Zhukov: “‘Along the Pripyat’, you will be able to reach [the] Bug, Narev, and Vistula toward Warsaw, and then transfer to the German rivers. Who knows, perhaps all the way to Berlin!’ He made a sharp turn, gave me an intense look, and repeated, stressing each word: ‘All the way to Berlin! Ah?’”⁹

In 1945, Admiral Grigoryev reached Berlin with his flotilla.

The Red Army had no marines. For land battles, it was easier and cheaper to use regular infantry, and landing on faraway shores was not yet in the plans. But suddenly Hitler made a thrust to the west, baring his back to Stalin. This careless step by Hitler brought on the most radical structural changes within the Red Army: the remains of defense were obliterated, while the offense was strengthened. The Soviet Marines were born in June 1940, when Hitler crushed France. At that time, there were two ocean fleets and two sea fleets in the Soviet armed forces, as well as two river flotillas: the Amur and the Dnepr. The ocean fleet did not receive any marines. The Pacific and Arctic oceans did not interest Stalin at the time. The Amur flotilla safeguarded the far eastern Soviet borders and also did not receive any marines. The Dnepr flotilla was divided into two attacking flotillas, and the Pinsk one, located in the Belarussian forests, received a company of marines. How interesting: marines not on the oceans, but in the Belarussian swamps. We can infer from these facts where Stalin was preparing for defense and where he was preparing for invasion.

A brigade of marines numbering several thousand men was formed as part of the Baltic fleet, whose only possible enemy could be Germany and its allies. On June 23, 1941, Soviet marines received their “battle baptism” during the defense of the naval base at Liepaja. The base was less than one hundred kilometers away from the German borders, but had no land obstacles and was not at all prepared for defense. According to testimony from Soviet admirals and German trophy documents, the bay of Liepaja was packed with Soviet submarines “like a can of sardines.” The official history of the Soviet navy, published by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, openly acknowledged that Liepaja was being prepared as a frontline base of the Soviet fleet for aggressive warfare on the seas.¹⁰ The marines in Liepaja were situated so close to the German borders that in the first twenty-four hours of the war they had already participated in defensive battles, although, of course, they had been created for a totally different purpose. In a defensive battle, regular infantry was far superior to marines.

The Danube military flotilla had two land-army companies, which officially were not listed as marines. But even before the German invasion, at least two Soviet rifle divisions—the 25th Chapaev and the 51st Perekop from the 14th Rifle Corps—prepared themselves in the Danube region for action as marines, and in the first days of the war they landed on Romanian shores.

The Black Sea fleet had even more powerful forces. Officially it had no marines, but in early June 1941, the 9th Special Rifle Corps under the command of Lieutenant General P. I. Batov was transferred from the Trans-Caucasus to the Crimea. The corps was very unusual in its personnel, arms, and training. On June 18 and 19, 1941, the Black Sea fleet conducted grandiose training exercises of an aggressive nature, during which one of the divisions of the 9th Special Rifle Corps was loaded on warships and performed a landing on “enemy” shores. A landing of an entire division from warships had never before been practiced in the Red Army.

The Kremlin paid special attention to the joint exercises of the fleet and the troops of the 9th Special Rifle Corps. These exercises were observed by high-ranking commanders who had specially arrived from Moscow. One of them, Vice Admiral I. I. Azarov, said that all the participants of the exercises felt that the training was not being conducted without reason, and that soon they would have to use in war what they had learned.¹¹ If the war began and the Soviet command sent the 9th Special Rifle Corps into action in accordance with its battle profile and designation of its preparations, where could it land? It was unlikely that it would land on Soviet shores, but possibly in Romania, Bulgaria, or Turkey. No matter where the troops landed, they would have to be supplied, which required either additional landing of troops or the advance of other Soviet troops through Romania to connect with the 9th Special Rifle Corps. During those same days, the 3rd Paratroops Corps, also in the Crimea, conducted grandiose training exercises with the landing of corps and brigade staff.

Soviet historians never connected these three events: the training of the 14th Rifle Corps for landing from ships of the Danube flotilla; the 3rd Paratroops Corps exercising in the Crimea (a short flight to the Danube's mouth); the training of the 9th Special Rifle Corps to land from warships of the Black Sea fleet. But these events were linked in time, place, and objective. They were the final stages of preparation for aggression on a grand scale.

Mountain Divisions on the Steppes of Ukraine

Airborne assault landings will be effective in mountainous battle areas. Since troops, headquarters, and support units, which operate in the rear, are particularly reliant on roads, it is possible to use air assaults to capture enemy troops operating in the rear, to attack his communications and roads, commanding heights, ravines, passes, railway junctions, and so on, and this can produce exceptionally important results. In general terms, the dropping of an assault landing force will hardly be expedient outside the framework of an offensive operation.

—*VOENNYI VESTNIK* [MILITARY HERALD], 1940

In 1941, the Soviet Union was preparing, painstakingly and tirelessly, for war. Each Soviet army had its unique structure, character, and purpose. Each “cover” army was created to deal with a clearly defined task in the forthcoming war of “liberation.” Sufficient material has been published to provide for a separate study on each of the thirty Soviet armies that existed in the first half of 1941. If a detailed study were made of the structure, disposition, and direction given to the training of just one Soviet army, the “liberation” tendency inherent to all Soviet preparations would become quite obvious.

Take, for example, the 9th Army. In number and name, it was not different from other Soviet armies, but it was a very unusual army. In 1941, this was the most powerful army in the world. It had six corps, including two mechanized (by June 22, 1941, 799 tanks altogether) and one cavalry corps. In total, on June 21, 1941, the 9th Army counted seventeen divisions, including two aviation, four tank, two motorized rifle, two cavalry, six rifle, and one mountain-rifle division. The rifle, motorized rifle, and cavalry divisions had tanks as well. By June 1, 1941, the Odessa military district, the divisions and corps of which became part of the 9th Army, had 1,114 tanks.¹ Another mechanized corps, the 27th (by June 22, 1941, it had 356 tanks), under the command of Major General I. E. Petrov, was to be added to the 9th Army. The corps was created in the Turkmenistan district and, before completing its formation, was secretly transferred west. After yet another mechanized corps was included, the 9th Army should have had twenty divisions, including six tank divisions.

The Soviet 9th Army was opposed by forces which had no tank divisions at all. The 9th Army was not yet completely manned and equipped, but it was planned to be in the next days and weeks, and by the highest quality weapons.

Colonel General P. Belov (at that time Major General, Commander of the 2nd Cavalry Corps of the 9th Army) testified that even the cavalry of this army was preparing to receive the best tanks in the world, the T-34.² At the head of the 9th Army was a colonel general. At that time, this was an extremely high rank. In all the armed forces of the USSR, there were only eight colonel generals; moreover, in the mighty Soviet tank troops there was none, in aviation there was none, and in the NKVD there was none. At the head of thirty Soviet armies were major generals and lieutenant generals. The 9th Army was the only exception among them.

In addition, the most promising officers and generals were gathered in this exceptional army. Three future Marshals of the Soviet Union were among them: Malinovsky, Zakharov, and Krylov, future Marshal of Aviation and three-time Hero of the Soviet Union Pokryshkin, future Marshal of Aviation Pstygo, future Army Generals Petrov, Pavlovsky, and Lashchenko, and many other talented and aggressive commanders who had already proven themselves in battle, like the twenty-eight-year-old Air Force Major General Osipenko. They all expressed hopes, which in most cases were later fulfilled. A caring hand carefully picked the best and most promising and placed them in this army.

But where was this super-army located? Here an amazing discovery awaits us: the 9th Army was not located near the German border. In the first half of June 1941, the Soviet Union was forming the most powerful army in the world on the Romanian border. The 9th Army was created in the fall of 1939, immediately after the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Its appearance was always an unwelcome sign for the country on whose border it emerged. In the fall of 1939, the 9th Army was deployed on the Finnish border. A week after the completion of its formation and concentration, the 9th Army fought for the bloody “liberation” of Finland. After the Finnish war, the army disappeared. The 9th Army command was disbanded on March 26, 1940. The army suddenly appeared again in June 1940 on the Romanian border. Ahead was a “liberation crusade” into Bessarabia, and Soviet sources indicated that the 9th Army was created especially for the completion of that important task.³ After another brief “liberation crusade,” the 9th Army disappeared again and its command was disbanded on July 10, 1940. In reality, its troops remained on the border, but in order not to alarm the neighbors those troops were not officially called an “army.” On June 14, 1941, the 9th Army again “reappeared” on the Romanian border, in the same exact place where a year ago it had completed the “liberation.”⁴ A new “liberation crusade” of the 9th Army into Romania would have entirely changed the strategic situation in Europe and in the world, since Romania was Germany’s main source of oil. A blow to Romania meant death to Germany.

But Hitler did not allow any of that to happen. In the declaration made by the German government to the Soviets at the start of the war, reasons were listed for the German attack against the Soviet Union. Among them was the unjustified concentration of Soviet troops on Romanian borders, which presented a clear danger to Germany.

Let’s pay attention to the mountain rifle divisions in the 9th Army. The 9th Army was located on the Romanian border, and its headquarters was in Odessa. There are no mountains in the Odessa military district. The 30th Irkutsk Mountain Rifle Division of the 9th

Army could be used only in Romania. There were plenty of mountains there. It is not at all coincidental that this division (commanded by Major General S. G. Galaktionov) was part of the 48th Rifle Corps of Major General Malinovsky, the most aggressive corps commander on the entire southern front. The 48th Rifle Corps was in the flank of the 9th Army which was closest to the front. If the 9th “Shock” Army moved to Romania, then most of the army would be fighting on flat land, while its right flank would scratch at the mountain chain.⁵ For this situation, it was most reasonable to have one mountain-rifle division, and precisely on the rightmost flank, which was exactly what was done.

Let’s examine another army, which was a carbon copy of the 9th Army. Formally, it was called just the 12th Army. It had one mechanized and two rifle corps, and other units. It had nine divisions, including two tank divisions and one motorized division. It was indistinguishable in number, name, and composition from other similar invasion armies. It had been set up specifically for the “liberation crusade” of the Red Army into Poland.⁶ It then had a tank corps, two cavalry corps, and two rifle divisions. It had little artillery and infantry, because there was no need here to break through a powerful defense. To the contrary, it had mobile troops necessary for a fast advance.⁷

Its subsequent fate was also typical. After the “liberation” campaign in Poland, the army stayed on the German border. Later, the 12th Army underwent the same transformation as all adjacent invasion armies. Its main strike mechanism was no longer called a tank corps, but a mechanized corps, to allay the fears of the leaders of neighboring countries. The deletion of the word “tank” from the corps’ name was followed by an increase in the number of tanks in the army. The cavalry was taken away from it. Its capacity for disrupting the enemy’s defenses was increased. The number of rifle divisions was tripled, and the amount of artillery in each division was doubled. In addition, one artillery brigade and four separate artillery regiments were added to the army. The capability to counter the enemy’s engineering defenses also increased when a separate regiment of engineers was brought into the army.

The unusual feature of the 12th Army was its ethnic composition. When Stalin was preparing to invade Poland in 1939, he filled the 12th Army with Ukrainians, apparently bearing in mind the long-standing animosity between Poles and Ukrainians. The army was formed in Ukraine. Therefore, the reservists were also drawn from there, and they formed a solid majority in the 12th Army. Far-reaching changes had already taken place in 1940. Ethnic Russians were appointed to key posts to mask the army’s unusual ethnic composition. The greater part of the army, however, was neither Ukrainian nor Russian. It was Caucasian: there were Georgians, Armenians, and Azeris in other armies, but their presence was particularly strong in the 12th Army. General Zhukov, who commanded the Military District, sought out Colonel I. K. Bagramian, an Armenian who was a longtime friend, from his job as a military academy lecturer, and appointed him Chief of the Operations Branch (War Planning) of the 12th Army. General Agrat Arushunyan, another Armenian, became the army’s chief of staff.

Zhukov gathered natives of the Caucasus into the ranks of the 12th Army because it was secretly but steadily changed into a mountain army. Zhukov personally demanded of its commanders that their troops should have a thorough knowledge of the Carpathian passes, not just on paper but from practical experience. In 1940, he ordered that “specially reinforced groups, made up of various combat vehicles and means of transport, should in the autumn be

sent through the passes along all more or less passable routes to make sure they could be surmounted in practical conditions by tanks, motor vehicles, tractors, animal-drawn transport, and pack-carrying beasts.”⁸

During the same year, German generals were secretly carrying out identical experiments on their western borders in the mountains. Their goal was to prepare a sudden attack against France and its allies. The German generals had to make sure that troops, tanks, artillery tractors, and transport could pass through the Ardennes. The German mountain experiments were successful. The attack on France was unanticipated both in time and place, and it was deadly.

The Soviet commanders were preparing to do the same against Germany. Marshal of the Soviet Union Bagramian, then a colonel responsible for planning the military operations of the 12th Army, said: “When I was studying the operational plans, I was struck by the following fact—our frontier army had neither a deployment nor a border-protection plan.” The colonel’s words demonstrate that the safe of the operations branch of the 12th Army contained plans. They were complex documents that had to be studied. Yet among those war plans there were none for defense.

Bagramian also described training exercises of the 12th Army attended by General Zhukov. Only offensive tactics were worked on, and on the maps the war took place on German territory. The game began with Soviet troops crossing the border river San. The military game was against a real enemy and it involved top secret intelligence information. Differences arose between Zhukov and the army commander. Commander of the 12th Army General Parusinov insisted: “We must do our best to inflict maximum casualties on the enemy with our first strike.” Zhukov understood that these were good intentions, but he wanted a strike on a wide rather than a very narrow front. That was what the argument was about. Shortly after the argument, Parusinov was replaced by General P. G. Ponedelin, Zhukov’s old friend. Then, the experiments in how to master the mountain passes continued.

Zhukov wasn’t interested in the mountain passes because of defense. If he had wanted to make the passes impassable to the enemy, he would have sent his troops to the mountains, dug up all mountain paths and roads, and built reinforced concrete fortifications near the passes, instead of right alongside the border river. It would have been more economical; the enemy could not have observed the construction work and would have been unable to cross the passes. But would anyone really attack the Soviet Union across mountain ranges when there were plenty of open spaces?

The mountains were exceptionally important to the Soviet command. Germany was separated from her main source of oil by a double barrier of mountains, in Czechoslovakia and Romania. A Soviet strike across the passes in Czechoslovakia or Romania would effectively cut the oil artery. Marshal Zhukov wrote: “Germany’s weak spot was oil supply, but it made up for this to some extent by importing oil from Romania.”⁹ The experiments in the mountains continued. The capabilities of each kind of troops and every type of combat and transport vehicle, operating in the conditions which prevailed in the Carpathian passes, were carefully studied. Standards were established and carefully checked, and guidance was compiled for the troops. The time taken by various types of vehicle to negotiate these mountain passes was carefully recorded and analyzed. The collected information, of course, was crucial for the planning of offensive operations, especially lightning operations. Bagramian was recording time frames to plan on the basis of very specific data.

None of the experiments were needed for defense. If the Carpathian passes had to be defended from the enemy, then speed was not needed: the soldiers simply had to stay where they were and not let the enemy pass.

In the 12th Army, as in all other Soviet armies, things were not called by their real names. In January 1940, the 96th Rifle Division was reorganized into a mountain rifle division. In May 1941, three more rifle divisions (the 44th, 58th, and 60th) were converted into mountain rifle divisions. At the same time, the recently formed 192nd Mountain Rifle Division was also added to the 12th Army. What did one call the 13th Corps, which had two divisions and both were mountain rifle ones? What did one call the 17th Corps, in which three out of four divisions were mountain rifle ones? What did one call an army, which out of its three corps had, in fact, two mountain rifle corps, and in which the mountain rifle divisions were a solid majority? I would call the corps “a mountain rifle corps” and the army “a mountain army.” But the Soviet High Command had reasons for not doing this. The corps continued to be called, as before, the 13th and 17th Rifle Corps, while the army was simply called the 12th Army.

The mountain rifle divisions were given their official name on June 1, 1941, while the order was issued on April 23, 1941; the actual transformation of the divisions from “rifle” into “mountain rifle” divisions was going on as early as the autumn of 1940.¹⁰ The 12th Army also influenced adjacent armies. The 72nd Mountain Rifle Division under the command of Major General P. I. Abramidze had been trained in the 12th Army and was transferred to the adjacent 26th army. Lieutenant General I. S. Konev’s 19th Army, which was being transferred from the northern Caucasus, was then secretly deployed behind the 12th and 26th armies. It also had mountain rifle divisions, for instance, the 28th Division under the command of Colonel K. I. Novik. It was at this time that deployment of yet another army, the 18th, began in the area between the 12th (mountain) and 9th “super-shock” armies in the eastern Carpathians. There are sufficient documents to infer that the original idea was that the 18th Army would be a carbon copy of the 12th (mountain) Army, although like the 12th it did not bear that name. Any researcher who studies the archives of the 12th and 18th armies will be surprised by their absolute similarity in structure. It is a most unusual example of twin armies.

The mountain rifle divisions were reinforced with specially selected and trained soldiers. These divisions were transferred to a special personnel composition, very different from the regular rifle divisions; they received special weapons and equipment. Just before the war began, a school for mountain training was established in the Caucasus. It trained the best Soviet mountain sportsmen and climbers to be military instructors. Once fully trained, these instructors were sent to the Soviet western frontier, since it was precisely here, and not in the Caucasus or Turkestan, that in June 1941 a great number of mountain rifle troops were concentrated.¹¹

It is time to ask: for which mountains? There is only one comparatively small mountain range on the Soviet western frontier. The eastern Carpathians resemble gently sloping hills rather than mountains. There was no point in having a powerful defense in the eastern Carpathians in 1941. First, that area of the Carpathians was dangerous and unfavorable for an aggressor coming from west to east. The enemy would come down from the mountains to the plains, and its army would have to be supplied across the whole of the eastern Carpathian, the Tatry, the Erzgebirge, and the Sudeten mountains. Second, the northern slope of the

eastern Carpathians formed a blunt wedge on the enemy's side of the frontier. If many Soviet troops were concentrated there for defensive purposes, even in peacetime, they would be surrounded by the enemy on three sides. By using the plains farther to the south, and especially more to the north of the eastern Carpathians, the enemy could strike at any time at the rest of the troops deployed on the mountains, thereby cutting their supply lines. Third, in 1941, there were too few enemy troops in the Carpathian Mountains to carry out an aggression, and the Soviet High Command was fully aware of this.¹²

The concentration of two Soviet mountain armies in the eastern Carpathians had catastrophic consequences. Nobody attacked these armies in the mountains. The German 1st Tank Group carried out its strike in the plain to the north of the eastern Carpathians, bypassing the mountains and cutting off the Soviet mountain armies from the main forces. The Soviet command confronted a dilemma: should they leave the two mountain armies in the Carpathian Mountains, where they would perish without a supply of ammunition and food, or should they urgently be led out of that mousetrap? They made the second choice. The two mountain armies, unprepared to fight in the plains, having light weapons and a lot of equipment useless in a flat area,¹³ fled from the mountains and immediately fell under attack from the German tank units. Having easily destroyed the fleeing Soviet mountain armies, the 1st Tank Group of the German army went ahead full speed and reached the rear of the Soviet 9th Army and defeated it. Once the German troops had dealt with those armies, the road opened to the totally undefended bases of the Soviet navy, to the Don basin, Kharkov, Zaporozhie, and Dnepropetrovsk. These were industrial regions of great importance. Once they were lost to the Germans, the Soviet Union produced only 100,000 tanks for the rest of the war, which was much more than Germany, but without the losses of these regions, the Soviet tank production could have been several times higher. When the Germans broke through to the south of Ukraine, the Soviet troops around Kiev found themselves in a very dangerous position. The Germans had cleared the road to the Caucasus and to Stalingrad—the heart of Soviet oil production.

The two mountain armies in the Carpathians in 1941 were completely unnecessary for defense. They were necessary only for offense. In early 1941, specially trained groups of rock climbers appeared in the mountain rifle divisions. But in the eastern Carpathians, they had nothing to do. Soviet troops had to be moved west by several hundred kilometers. The same factors that made the Carpathians unsuitable for aggression from west to east made them very suitable for aggression from east to west. As the troops moved ahead into the mountains, their supply lines remained on Soviet territory, mainly on very flat terrain. The eastern Carpathians jutted far out into the west and cut the enemy grouping in two. This was a natural springboard which, if heavy forces were built up on it in peacetime, positioned them as if they were in the enemy's rear. They only had to advance, threatening the enemy's rear and thus compelling its troops to withdraw along the whole front.

Only negligible enemy forces were located in the Carpathian Mountains. The Soviet High Command knew this, and that was precisely why they had concentrated two armies there. The only way to use these armies in war was to move them forward. Two mountain ridges spread from the Carpathians: one went west toward Czechoslovakia, the other south toward Romania.

Stalin in May

Stalin [has] put before himself a foreign policy goal of tremendous importance, which he hopes to reach through personal efforts.

—COUNT VON DER SCHULENBURG, SECRET REPORT TO
THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT, MAY 12, 1941

On May 4, 1941, Stalin became chairman of the Soviet government,¹ replacing Molotov who became deputy chairman. At that time, many British and American politicians and diplomats were confused by that turn of events. For the first time in Soviet history, the top party and government leadership was officially concentrated in one man's hands. In 1922, having assumed the position of general secretary of the Communist Party, Stalin refused to take any government positions. Stalin elevated his command post above the government and above the country. Officially, he was responsible for nothing. All successes were attributed to Stalin. All failures were attributed to his enemies, careerists who took advantage of and distorted the orders of Stalin the genius. The “victory of the collectivization” was a creation of Stalin's genius, while millions perished from hunger because of the mistakes of regional level functionaries. Stalin officially had no ties to the Great Purge—Ezhov, the People's Commissar for Interior Affairs, shouldered the whole blame. That period was derogatorily called *Ezhovshchina*.

It wasn't Stalin who signed a pact with Hitler. The treaty entered history as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. In Germany, the responsibility for the pact was borne not so much by Ribbentrop as by Adolf Hitler, the chancellor, though he was not present when the pact was signed. But Stalin, who was present at the signing, had no government position at that moment. On April 13, 1941, a pact was signed with Japan: Stalin was present, but again, did not shoulder any responsibility. Hitler many times invited Stalin to a personal meeting in a friendly atmosphere. But Stalin sent Molotov to meet Hitler.

Then, when the victors were clearly defined, Stalin, of course, personally met with Churchill and Roosevelt. During the course of talks at the highest level, Stalin never said no.

Molotov did it for him. He even received the nickname “Mr. No.” All demands came from Molotov, all concessions from Stalin. Simply put, Stalin did good with his hands, and evil with the hands of others. Those who did evil on Stalin’s orders carried the responsibility, while Stalin remained clean.

However, in May 1941, Stalin took on the official burden of government responsibility. For Stalin a new title meant not a strengthening of power, but a limiting of it, more precisely self-limiting. From then on, he not only took the most important decisions, but also carried official responsibility for them. Until then, Stalin’s power had only been limited by the outside borders of the Soviet Union, and not always even by them. What forced him to voluntarily take on the burden of responsibility for his actions?

Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union N. G. Kuznetsov testified: “When Stalin took on the duties of Chairman of the People’s Commissars Council, the system of leadership practically did not change.”² If practically nothing changed, why did Stalin need the new title? “Meanwhile, all of Stalin’s deeds and crimes were focused, logical and calculated.”³

What was Stalin’s logic? “I don’t know any problems that could relate to the internal situation in the Soviet Union and be so serious as to elicit such an action from Stalin. I would be more certain in stating that if Stalin decided to take the highest government position, the reasons for his action should be sought in the [realm of] foreign affairs,” reported Schulenburg, the German ambassador to Moscow. Soviet marshals said the same thing: Stalin’s appointment was tied to foreign affairs.⁴

Let us examine what foreign policy problems Stalin was expected to solve in May 1941. Germany crushed many European countries, so there could be no problems with the governments of those countries. The Soviet Union had friendly relations with France, the large part of which was occupied by Germany. There were no problems with Britain: it retained independence and stretched a hand of friendship to Stalin, exemplified in a letter from Churchill to Stalin dated July 1, 1941. Roosevelt was more than amicable toward Stalin: he warned him of dangers, and American technology flowed into the USSR. There were only two possible enemies. Japan had seen a demonstration of Soviet might at Khalkhin-Gol in August 1939, signed an agreement with the Soviet Union, and looked away from Soviet borders. Therefore, only Germany could have forced Stalin to take the step that seemed inexplicable at first glance.

What could Stalin, using his new official title of head of the government, undertake regarding Germany? There were three possibilities: establish an unshakeable peace with Germany; officially lead an armed struggle against German aggression; or officially lead a sudden attack on Germany.

The first possibility can be ruled out immediately, because Molotov had already signed a peace pact with Germany. Stalin continued to use Molotov for peace talks. It is known that even on June 21, 1941, Molotov tried to meet with German leaders, while Stalin made no such attempts.

The second possibility also doesn’t withstand examination. Stalin could not have assumed leadership in anticipation of a German attack, simply because he did not foresee it. In the first day of the war, the head of the government should have addressed the people and told them the terrible news. But Stalin avoided fulfilling his duties, and on June 22 Molotov spoke to the people. Why would Stalin sit in Molotov’s chair in May, only to hide behind

his back in June? In a defensive war, Stalin used his well-tested method of ruling the country: he took all important decisions, but the responsibility for them was borne by Molotov, Malenkov, Timoshenko, and Zhukov. Only a month later did the members of the Politburo force Stalin to take the official post of People's Commissar for Defense, and on August 8 the post of Supreme Commander in Chief. Would Stalin, "foreseeing a defensive war," have taken a high leadership position, just to shun all responsibility as soon as such a war started?

We are left with the third explanation: Stalin had crushed Europe using Hitler's hands, and was preparing a sudden attack against Germany. Stalin planned to personally lead the "liberation" as the head of the government of the USSR.

The Communist Party prepared the Soviet people and army for the fact that the command to begin a "war of liberation" in Europe would be given personally by Stalin. *Pravda* wrote on August 18, 1940: "And when the Marshal of the Revolution comrade Stalin gives the signal, hundreds of thousands of pilots, navigators, [and] paratroopers will descend upon the enemy's head with all the might of their arms, the arms of socialist justice. The Soviet air force will bring happiness to mankind!" Similar statements filled the pages of *Krasnaya Zvezda* and all other Soviet newspapers and magazines.

Upon entering into office, every head of state declares his agenda. Stalin did so as well. Only Stalin gave his speech, which could be counted as an agenda, in the tight inner circle of the highest Red Army commanders, behind closed doors. On May 5, 1941, the day after his appointment as head of state, Stalin spoke in the Kremlin at a reception in honor of graduates from the military academies. The audience in the convention hall of the Great Kremlyovski Palace, where he gave the speech, consisted of graduates, professors, and teachers from sixteen academies of the Red Army and nine faculties of civilian universities, as well as representatives of the Red Army and the Fleet High Command (including the People's Commissars in both organizations and the Chief of General Staff). Stalin arrived, followed by members, actual and potential, of the Politburo (except for N. S. Khrushchev, who was holding a Central Committee plenary meeting in Kiev). The audience numbered two thousand people. Stalin spoke for forty minutes. Considering Stalin's capability for silence, forty minutes was an extraordinarily long time.

Stalin did not speak before graduates of military academies every year. There were only two such occasions. The first time had been in 1935. The Great Purge was secretly being planned when Stalin told the graduates of military academies that "cadres determine everything." The meaning of Stalin's words was simple: for great feats, the country needed good teams; good commanders would solve all problems, but without them, everything would be lost. It is doubtful that anyone at the time understood the meaning of Stalin's words. But Stalin had in mind nothing less than the complete extermination of almost all of the Communist hierarchy—state, party, military, technical, scientific, cultural, and all others. Stalin planned almost a complete transformation of the leading layer of the country. Almost everyone who listened to Stalin's speech in 1935 in two years landed in torture chambers and execution cellars.

In May 1941, Stalin for the second time spoke before graduates of military academies. Now, a more serious and dark deed was being planned, because this time Stalin's speech was given in secrecy. Stalin spoke about the situation in Europe, the war, and Germany. In his usual manner, Stalin posed questions and then answered them. Was it true that the German

army was invincible? This question was repeated in Stalin's speech three times. Stalin's answer was no. Stalin said that Germany fought under the flag of conquering other nations. Under that flag, Germany would not be successful. Stalin asked why Germany lost World War I. Because it fought on two fronts, he answered. This was a very direct hint. Stalin led his audience to a logical conclusion: Germany fought Great Britain, which was backed by the United States. If the Soviet Union opened a second front, Germany would be defeated, just as it was during World War I.

I have in my possession the unpublished memoirs of Major General of the Air Force M. V. Vodopianov, who was the very first Hero of the Soviet Union. According to Vodopianov's memoirs, the listeners correctly understood Stalin's hints, and the room was filled with applause and cheer. The General Secretary of the Comintern, the Bulgarian Communist Georgyi Dimitrov, wrote in his diary that Stalin at that moment was in an extremely good mood. During the banquet that followed his speech, Stalin twice made a toast: the first was to the commanders and the professors from the military academies, the second to the health of artillerymen, tankers, and aviators.⁵ A third toast deserved special attention. It was given by Lieutenant General A. K. Sivkov, who toasted Stalin's peaceful foreign policy. Stalin intervened:

Allow me to make a correction. A peaceful foreign policy secured peace in our country. A peaceful foreign policy is a good thing. For a while, we drew a line of defenses until we re-armed our army [and] supplied it with modern means of combat. Now, when our army has been rebuilt, our technology modernized, [now that we are] strong [enough] for combat, now we must shift from defense to offense. In conducting the defense of our country, we are compelled to act in an aggressive manner. From defense we have to shift to a military policy of offense. It is indispensable that we reform our training, our propaganda, our press to a mindset of offense. The Red Army is a modern army, and the modern army is an army of offense.⁶

On May 5, 1941, Stalin made it perfectly clear to his generals that there would be a war with Germany and that the Soviet Union would be the aggressor. It is interesting to note that a few days after the celebration in the Kremlin, Lieutenant General Sivkov, who made a toast to Stalin's peaceful foreign policy, was discharged.⁷

In March 1939, Stalin publicly accused Great Britain and France of wanting to draw all of Europe into war, while they stayed on the sidelines and would later "enter the scene with fresh forces, fight, of course, 'in the interests of peace,' and dictate their terms to the weakened participants of the war."⁸ In the same speech, Stalin for the first time declared that the international arena needed to prepare for "surprises." In August 1939, Stalin presented the first "surprise," which stunned not only the Soviet people, but the entire world, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

On September 1, 1939, a week after this pact, Germany invaded Poland. On September 17, 1939, the Red Army suddenly attacked the rear of the Polish army. The following day, the Soviet government proclaimed on the radio the cause for the attack: "Poland [has become] a convenient staging ground for any unanticipated events that might create a threat to the USSR. . . . The Soviet government can no longer hold a neutral position towards these facts. . . . In light of such a situation, the Soviet government [has] issued orders to the High

Command of the Red Army to order troops to cross the border and take under their defenses the lives and property of the population.”⁹

Here we can see the difference between Stalin and Hitler. They divided Poland and both conducted aggressive war on Polish territory. But Hitler sent his troops to Poland to “expand the living space for Germans,” while Stalin sent in the Red Army “to free the Polish people from the evil war, into which they were drawn by foolish governments, and to give the people the opportunity to lead peaceful lives.”¹⁰

Stalin’s propaganda could not conceal its joy that Germany was destroying more and more countries, governments, armies, and political parties. The Soviet leadership was ecstatic: *Pravda* declared it “[m]odern warfare in all its terrible glory!”¹¹ A description of Europe at war read: “a pile of corpses, a pornographic sight, where hyenas eat hyenas.”¹² On the same page of *Pravda*, there was a friendly telegram from Stalin to Hitler.

Suddenly, everything changed. May 1941 saw a sharp turn in all Soviet propaganda. Here is *Pravda*’s tone on the day after Stalin’s secret speech: “Beyond the borders of our Motherland burns the flame of the Second Imperialist War. All the burden of its countless calamities falls on the shoulders of the workers. The people do not want war. Their eyes are looking toward the land of socialism, which reaps the fruits of peaceful labor. They rightfully see in the armed forces of our Motherland—in the Red Army and Fleet—a reliable bulwark of peace. In the current tumultuous world situation we must be ready for all surprises.”¹³

The same tone and the same words were used in September 1939, when the Red Army suddenly attacked the rear of the Polish army and “helped the Polish people to get out of the war.”

June 13, 1941

Stalin was not one who openly declared his intentions.

—ROBERT CONQUEST, *THE GREAT TERROR*

On May 5, 1941, in the Kremlin, Stalin in essence told the graduates of the military academies to disregard official propaganda and to prepare for war.¹ On June 13, 1941, Moscow radio broadcast a rather unusual announcement of the Soviet Union Telegraph Agency (TASS). It claimed that “Germany was following the conditions of the Soviet-German pact as flawlessly as the Soviet Union,” that the rumors of an impending German attack on the USSR “were clumsily fabricated propaganda by the enemies of Germany and the USSR, interested in broadening and prolonging the war.” The following day, central Soviet newspapers published that announcement; a week later, Germany invaded the USSR. Everyone knew the author of the TASS announcement. Stalin’s characteristic style was recognized by generals in Soviet staffs, inmates in the labor camps, and Western experts.

Both the Soviet and foreign press wrote extensively about the TASS announcement. Many of those who spoke out on the subject laughed at Stalin. The TASS announcement was sometimes described as a sign of nearsightedness. However, the June 13, 1941, TASS announcement was more mysterious and inexplicable than ridiculous. Only its author is clear, while the rest is a puzzle.

The TASS announcement did not at all fit in with Stalin’s character. The man most familiar with Stalin, his personal secretary Boris Bazhanov, characterized him in the following way: “Secretive and extremely sly. . . . He possessed an extraordinary ability to remain silent, and in this respect was unique in a country where everyone spoke too much.” Following are some more descriptions. A. Avtorkhanov: “He was an implacable enemy of word inflation and excessive talking. Do not say what you are thinking.” A. Antonov-Ovseenko: “At critical moments, Stalin’s actions came before his words.” Robert Conquest, a scholar of the Stalin era, noted Stalin’s secretiveness and silence as the strongest points of his personality: “Extremely reserved and secretive. We still have to peer through the darkness of Stalin’s exceptional secrecy. . . . Stalin never said what was on his mind, even regarding political goals.”

It has been said that the ability to keep silent is much less common among people than any other talent. From that standpoint, Stalin was a genius—he knew how to keep silent. This was not only the strongest point of his character, but his most powerful weapon. With his silence, he disarmed the vigilance of his enemies; Stalin's attacks were always sudden and therefore fatal. Why then did he speak on June 13, 1941, and to a mass audience? Whom did Stalin address? Stalin's empire was highly centralized, and the mechanism of state government, especially after the Great Purge, was so perfected that any order was immediately communicated from the highest ranks to the lowest executors, and was immediately carried out. If in June 1941 Stalin had some concerns that had to be related hastily to millions of executors, why not use the perfect power structure that communicated all orders without distortion or delay? If the TASS announcement of June 13, 1941, was serious, it would have been repeated on all the secret channels. But Marshal of the Soviet Union A. M. Vassilevsky testified that after the announcement was published in print it “was not followed by any directives regarding the armed forces or reexamination of previously adopted policy.”² He also said that nothing changed in the agendas of the General Staff or the Narkomat (People's Commissariat for Defense), “and nothing was supposed to change. . . . But because no directives followed it, we quickly realized that it was irrelevant both for the armed forces and for the country as a whole.”³

Not only was the TASS announcement not repeated through secret military channels, but at the same time as the announcement came out, an order was issued to the troops in certain military districts, for example, in the Baltic district, that was in meaning and spirit quite the opposite of the TASS announcement.⁴ While the TASS announcement was broadcast on the radio, the military newspapers that were inaccessible to outsiders began to publish radically different ideas. This was reported, for instance, by Vice Admiral I. I. Azarov.⁵

There were five military districts on the Soviet Union's western borders: the First Strategic Echelon of the Red Army. Let's examine what happened around June 13, 1941, in the Kiev special district. There are many records of the events of that day. One of them is kept in the Central Archive of the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation.⁶ This is the “Directive from the People's Commissar for Defense of the USSR and the Chief of General Staff of the Red Army to the Military Council of the Kiev special military district.” The document is dated June 13, 1941, and labeled “Top Secret, Special Importance.”

The Soviet system of secret classification had four levels of secrecy: “For Official Use Only,” “Secret,” “Top Secret,” and “Top Secret, Special Importance.” There was one more level, established by Stalin: “Top Secret, Special File.” Documents in this category were produced only in one copy and could not leave the premises of the Kremlin. “Top Secret, Special Importance” was the highest level of secrecy that could have been used beyond the Kremlin. Such a document arrived at the staff headquarters of the Kiev special military district while the radio was broadcasting the strange TASS announcement. The directive ordered the “transfer [of] all deep-rear divisions and corps commands with the corps formations to new camps closer to the state border.”

Four armies were camped in the Kiev district; behind them were five rifle corps and four motorized corps. According to the directive of June 13, 1941, all five rifle corps in the Kiev district moved to the border: the 31st, 36th, 37th, 49th, and 55th. A rifle corps three divisions strong had 966 field-guns and mortars, 2,100 machine guns, and more than 2,000

automobiles. A rifle corps had 50,000 soldiers and officers. Five corps made a quarter of a million men. The directive further demanded “to keep the transfer of troops completely secret. March at night and conduct tactical training. Take along with the troops all movable reserves of ammunition and fuel.” The document was signed by the People’s Commissar for Defense of the USSR, Marshal of the Soviet Union Timoshenko, and the Chief of General Staff Army General Zhukov. “We had to prepare all operational documentation that dealt with moving five rifle and four motorized corps from the positions of permanent location to the border zone,” wrote Bagramian (at that time a colonel and chief of operational staff in the Kiev special military district).⁷ “They took with them everything necessary for action. The move was conducted at night to secure secrecy.”⁸ Colonel General I. I. Liudovnikov (at that time a colonel and commander of the 200th Rifle Division in the 31st Corps) was one of those who executed this order: “We were ordered to begin a campaign . . . in full deployment . . . concentrated in the forests 10 to 15 km northeast of the border town Kovel. The move was to be made secretly, only at night, on forested terrain.”⁹ Marshal of the Soviet Union K. S. Moskalenko (at that time a major general of artillery and commander of the 1st Anti-Tank Brigade) remembered: “New trains kept arriving, with new men and new military equipment.”¹⁰ The official history of the Kiev military district stated: “Major General F. F. Aliabushev’s 87th Rifle Division on June 14, under pretext of training exercises, was moved to the state border.”¹¹

The moving of troops to the border under the pretext of training exercises was done on orders from Moscow. Marshal Zhukov said: “The *Narkom* [People’s Commissar] for Defense S. K. Timoshenko recommended to the commanders of military districts to conduct tactical exercises in the direction of state borders, with the effect of bringing troops closer to the regions of planned deployment for the purpose of cover.” As was previously done prior to the Finnish campaign of 1940, “covering the state borders” was a code expression meaning “preparing to cross the borders.” This recommendation was brought into effect by the districts, but with a significant difference: “a significant part of artillery did not take part in the move.”¹²

Marshal of the Soviet Union K. K. Rokossovskii (at that time Major General, commander of the 9th Motorized Corps) explains that the artillery had been ordered to the border slightly earlier.¹³

That was a brief description of the events of this day in one of the five border military districts. On the eve of the broadcast of the TASS announcement, the commander of that same Kiev special military district received another directive, with the same signatures and same level of secrecy—“Top Secret, Special Importance.” The directive of June 12, 1941, stated:

During the time period June 15 to July 10, 1941, the 16th army with the following components will arrive on the territory of the Kiev special military district: the command of the army with service personnel, 5th Mechanized Corps (13th and 17th Tank, and 109th Motorized Divisions); 57th Tank Division; 32nd Rifle Corps (46th and 152nd Rifle Divisions, 126th Corps Artillery Regiment). . . . I forbid all open telephone and telegraph communication in connection with the arrival, unloading, and placement of the new troops. Nobody except you, members of the Military Council, and the chief of staff in the district, can know about this. . . . All units arriving to the territory of the district have

been issued false names, listed below. The false name is to be used in all correspondence, including on envelopes of top secret documents.¹⁴

Four armies and nine separate corps made up the Kiev special military district. In addition, in May 1941 began the intense transfer of troops to the Kiev district from the inner regions of the country and from faraway eastern and southern borders. Bagramian described May in the Kiev district: “On May 25, the command of the 31st Rifle Corps from the Far East arrived in the district. . . . In the second half of May, we received a directive from the General Staff that ordered [us] to receive the command of the 34th Rifle Corps from the North Caucasus district, four 12,000-strong divisions and one mountain rifle division. . . . [At] the end of May, train after train arrived in the district. The Operational Department turned into a train dispatcher bureau and received all information about the incoming troops.”¹⁵

Even before June 13, 1941, troops flowed from the central regions of the Soviet Union to the five border military districts. Just three armies from among these troops required 939 railroad trains—the 22nd Army from the Ural military district, the 21st Army from the Volga military district, and the 16th Army from the Trans-Baikal military district.¹⁶ The 57th Tank Division of the 16th Army came from Mongolia. Preliminary relocation of the armies began in May 1941; other troops were moving as well. The former deputy of the People’s Commissar for State Control, I. V. Kovalev, wrote that “in May [and] early June, the transportation system of the USSR had to complete [the] transportation of nearly 800,000 reserve troops. . . . These moves had to be conducted secretly.”¹⁷

The 16th Army consisted of six divisions, among them three tank and one motorized. It had a total of thirty regiments: eleven artillery, seven tank, five motor-rifle, six rifle, and one motorcycle. The army was small in number of divisions and regiments; however it was supreme in technology, especially tanks and artillery. The 5th Mechanized Corps of the 16th Army counted 1,076 tanks.¹⁸ The 57th Separate Tank Division counted 375 tanks, and the two rifle divisions had another thirty-two tanks. In total, the 16th Army had 1,483 tanks and 560 armored cars, among them 397 heavy armored vehicles armed with cannon. The 16th Army was transferred across seven thousand kilometers. Lieutenant General M. F. Lukin commanded the army. The chief of staff of the 16th Army was Colonel M. A. Shalin—the future head of the GRU.

The relocation of the 16th Army from the region beyond Baikal to Ukraine began on May 26, 1941, and was scheduled to end on July 10. Lieutenant General P. A. Kurochkin, commander of the Trans-Baikal military district, personally supervised the dispatching of trains. We can find many testimonials to this massive railroad operation, among them the memoirs of Major General A. A. Lobachev, who at that time was a member of the military council of the 16th Army: “The chief of staff reported that an important cable came in from Moscow, concerning the 16th Army. . . . The order from Moscow proposed to relocate the 16th Army to a new place. M. F. Lukin was to immediately appear before the General Staff to receive directions, and Colonel M. A. Shalin and I were to organize the dispatch of trains.”¹⁹

Only three people—the Commander of the Army General Lukin, Lobachev, and the Chief of Staff of the 16th Army Colonel M. A. Shalin—knew that the 16th Army was being transferred west, but they did not know precisely where. All the other generals of the 16th Army were “secretly” informed that the army was headed for the Iranian border, and that the junior commanders were to be told that the reason for the transfer was training exercises; the wives of the command staff were to be told that the army was leaving for training camps.

I have interviewed hundreds of people from that generation, and they all had forebodings of the war. Where did they come from? They could not have known about Hitler's preparations. They must have seen the preparations of the Red Army and understood that war was unavoidable. General Lobachev described the extraordinary level of secrecy with which the 16th army was transferred: the trains were sent only by night and they did not stop at large and medium stations; the staff of the 16th Army was moved in cargo railroad cars with the doors and windows completely shut; at small stations, where the trains stopped, everyone was forbidden to exit the train. At that time, a passenger train covered the Trans-Siberian route in more than eleven days, while cargo trains were even slower. One could transport soldiers and officers in fully closed cars, but here we are talking about the high-ranking staff of an army. Such level of secrecy was unusual even by Soviet standards. In 1945, a flow of troops going in the opposite direction traveled on the Trans-Siberian railroad, heading for a surprise attack on Japanese troops in Manchuria and China. For the purposes of secrecy, all the generals wore officers' uniforms, with many fewer stars than they had earned, but they still traveled in passenger trains. In 1941, on the other hand, generals were being transported in cargo trains. What for?

There were five military districts in the First Strategic Echelon of the Red Army. We examined what happened in the Kiev special military district on June 13, 1941, and on the days before and after that date. The same went on in the four other military districts. On June 14, the military council of the Odessa military district received an order to create an army headquarters in Tiraspol.²⁰ This indicated the creation of the 9th Army on the Romanian border. From June 14 to June 19, the military councils of all the western border districts were directed to send out the frontline army commands to their field headquarters by June 22 and 23. Zhukov's June 19 telegram to Kirponos, the commander of the Kiev special military district, stated: "The People's Commissar of Defense has issued the following orders: the command should leave for Ternopol by June 22, 1941, leaving the subordinate district commander in Kiev. . . . The selection and transfer of front command is to be kept top secret, and the district staff personnel should be notified of said secrecy."²¹ Zhukov sent out similar telegrams to Kuznetsov, the commander of the Baltic special military district, and Pavlov, the commander of the Western special military district, on the same day. The command of the Northwestern Front, along with its district's commander, should have arrived at Panevezhis on June 22 and 23; the same should have happened on the Western front at Obuz-Lesni. This mass exodus of front and army command units was approved by Stalin on the pretext of conducting joint summer training for commanders and troops.

On June 14, the military council of the Baltic special military district approved a plan for the relocation of a row of divisions and regiments to the border zone.²² Here are some standard reports from those days. Major General S. Iovlev (at the time commander of the 64th Rifle Division of the 44th Rifle Corps, 13th Army) recounted: "On June 15, 1941, the commander of the Western special military district, General D. G. Pavlov, ordered the divisions of our corps to prepare for relocation in complete formation. . . . We were not told our destination."²³ Colonel General L. M. Sandalov (at that time colonel, chief of staff of the 4th Army of the Western special military district) remembered: "On the southern wing of the 4th Army a new division appeared—the 75th Rifle Division. It advanced from Mosyr and set up well-concealed tent camps in the forests."²⁴

Marshal of the Soviet Union K. A. Meretskov (at that time general, and the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense) said: "According to my orders, training exercises of the mechanized corps were conducted. The corps was brought out, as part of the training, to the border zone and left there. Later I told Zakharov that the corps of Major General R. I. Malinovsky was also in the area, and must also be brought to the border zone as part of training exercises."²⁵ Marshal of the Soviet Union R. I. Malinovsky (at that time major general, commander of the 48th Rifle Corps of the Odessa military district) confirmed that the order was executed: "The corps left the Kirovograd region for Beltsy on June 7, and on June 14 it was in its place. This move was disguised as extensive training exercises."²⁶ Marshal of the Soviet Union M. V. Zakharov (at the time major general, and chief of staff of the Odessa military district) recounted: "On June 15, the command of the 48th Rifle Corps, the 74th and 30th Rifle Divisions concentrated, under the guise of training, in the forests several kilometers to the east of the city of Beltsy."²⁷ The marshal noted that the commands of the corps, the units, and the 74th Rifle Division were on high alert. He said that the 16th Tank Division also participated in the "training." Marshal of the Soviet Union A. I. Eremenko (at that time commander of the 1st Army) said: "On June 20, the staff of the 13th Army received an order from the command of the Western military district to relocate from Mogilev to Novogradok."²⁸

Not only armies, corps, and divisions were transferred to the borders. We have hundreds of testimonies of much smaller units being transferred as well. Lieutenant General V. F. Zotov (at the time a major general, and chief of the engineer troops of the Baltic special military district) remembered: "The sapper battalions were mobilized according to wartime regulations . . . ten battalions, which arrived from the Far East, were completely armed."²⁹ Colonel S. F. Khvalev (at the time deputy commander of the 202nd Motorized Division of the 12th Mechanized Corps of the 8th Army) recounted: "During the night of June 18, 1941, our division left for field training."³⁰ As the colonel put it, "it so happened" that the units found themselves right at the border before the war began, in the immediate vicinity of the state frontiers.

A small fragment is known from the military order received on that same day by Colonel I. D. Cherniakhovsky, commander of a tank division in that same 12th Mechanized Corps: "Upon the receipt of this order, commander of the 28th Tank Division Colonel Cherniakhovsky is to bring all units to battle condition in accordance with plans of high alert, but without declaring a state of alert. All work is to be conducted quickly, but without noise, without panic and talk; have the necessary norms of portable and transportable reserves needed for life and battle."³¹

Trophy German documents indicate that the Germans' first encounter with the 28th Tank Division occurred near Siauliai. However, as Marshal P. P. Poluboyarov testified, the division was supposed to come out of Riga to the Soviet-German border.³² The German invasion found this division, like so many others, still on its way, because it simply did not have enough time to reach the border. The memoirs of Major I. A. Khizenko begin with the chapter "Marching toward the Border."³³ He wrote about the 80th Rifle Division of the 37th Rifle Corps: "In the evening of June 16, General Prokhorov gathered all staff personnel for a conference. He declared an order from the commander of the Kiev special military district to move the divisions to a new region of concentration. . . . There are talks that the impending march will be an unusual one."³⁴

This list is endless. Overall, the First Strategic Echelon of the Red Army had 170 tank, motorized, cavalry, and rifle divisions. Fifty-six of them were located right on the border. They could not move any farther ahead. But even of these, everything that could move was moving forward and hiding in the border forests. General I. I. Feduninsky, commander of the 15th Rifle Corps of the Fifth Army, testified that he led four regiments from the 45th and 62nd Rifle Divisions “into the woods, closer to the border.”³⁵ The remaining 114 divisions of the First Strategic Echelon stayed in the deeper territories of the western border districts, and could be moved to the border.

How many of the 114 divisions began to move toward the border in the wake of the reassuring TASS announcement from June 13, 1941? The answer is: all of them! “Between June 12 and June 15, all the western military districts were issued an order to move all deeply located divisions closer to the state borders.”³⁶

Now, let’s look at what was happening on June 13, 1941, in the inner military districts of the Soviet Union, in the far inland Urals, and in the Siberian and Altay provinces. Lieutenant General N. I. Birukov, commander of the 186th Rifle Division of the 62nd Rifle Corps of the Ural military district, recounted: “On June 13, 1941, we received an order of special importance from staff headquarters, which stated that the division had to move to a ‘new camp.’ The address of the new quarters was not given even to me, the division commander. Only when passing through Moscow did I find out that our division was to concentrate in the forests west of Idritsa.”³⁷

In peacetime, a division receives “secret,” but very rarely “top secret,” documents. A document of “special importance” can appear in a division only during wartime and only in extreme cases, when an operation of great importance is prepared. Many Soviet divisions did not receive a single document with this label of top secrecy during the four years of the war. Yet, it was peacetime when the commander of the 186th Rifle Division received a document of such an exceptionally high level of secrecy. The document’s contents were ostensibly trivial: send the division to a new camp. General Birukov, however, placed the words “new camp” in quotation marks. He and the superior officials who had sent the document knew perfectly well that they were not talking of a “new camp,” but of something much more serious.

All divisions in the Ural military district received similar orders. Official records of the district clearly fixed the date: “The 112th Rifle Division was the first to begin loading. On the morning of June 13, the train left the small railroad station. . . . Other trains followed. Then began the loading of units from the 98th, 153rd, and 186th Rifle Divisions.”³⁸ The 170th and the 174th Rifle Divisions, artillery, sapper, and anti-tank units followed. New administrations were created for operating the Ural divisions, while the old ones were submitted to the command of the staff of the new 22nd Army.

This mass of staffs and troops moved from the Urals toward the Belorussian forests under the cover of the reassuring TASS announcement. The 22nd Army was not alone. General S. M. Shtemenko wrote: “Right before the beginning of the war, under the strictest secrecy, additional forces began to gather in the border forests. Five armies were transferred from the depth of the country toward the borders.”³⁹ General S. P. Ivanov, who in the early 1970s headed a group of experts researching this issue, added: “At the same time, three more armies were preparing for relocation.”⁴⁰ All these armies would form the Second Strategic Echelon of the Red Army.

Why didn't all eight armies move simultaneously? In February, March, April, and May, a grandiose secret transfer of Soviet troops—from the inner regions to the borders—was conducted. It was concluded in time, but thousands of railroad cars had to return thousands of kilometers back inland. Therefore, on June 13, when the new, giant, secret movement of troops began, there were not enough cars for all the armies. The Second Strategic Echelon contained seventy-seven tank, motorized, and rifle divisions, not counting tens of separate regiments and hundreds of separate battalions. They all began their secret movement toward the western borders of the USSR under the cover of the TASS announcement.⁴¹ To the 114 divisions of the First Strategic Echelon, we must add seventy-seven divisions of the Second Strategic Echelon that began to move toward the western borders from the central regions of the country, from Siberia, and even from the Far East.

Everything that Soviet officers, generals, and marshals wrote about in their memoirs was fully confirmed by reports of German intelligence to their commanders in the spring and early summer of 1941: the Red Army was heading in giant surges toward the western borders. Many independent sources confirm the same fact. The massive Red Army movement toward the western borders was felt even in Soviet prisons. G. Ozerov, one of the deputies of airplane designer A. N. Tupolev, at that time was in prison, together with Tupolev and his entire design bureau. They received an order to create the best dive-bomber in the world. They were told that if they designed the plane, they would be let out of prison. They designed behind bars, but had constant contact with engineers from airplane and automobile factories, and with officials from the People's Commissariat of Aviation Industry. Former inmate Ozerov recounted: "Inhabitants of dachas along the Belorussian and Vindavsk roads complain that they cannot sleep at night [because] trains with tanks and cannon are being herded through!"⁴²

Thus, "right before the war, in accordance with orders from the General Staff of the Red Army, certain units of the western special military district began to move to the state border."⁴³ Having crushed the First Strategic Echelon and broken through its defenses, the first German units suddenly stumbled across new divisions, corps, and armies (for example, the 16th Army near Shepetovka in late June), about whose existence the German commanders had no idea. The plan for the blitzkrieg was built on calculations of lightning-speed destruction of the Soviet troops right along the borders. But having completed this plan, the German army discovered a new wall of armies, which was coming out of the Northern Caucasus, Volga, the Urals, Siberia, Trans-Baikal, and the Far East.

Thousands of railroad cars are needed for the transfer of even one army. They have to be sent to the station of departure, loaded with the army, heavy weapons, and reserves, and then cross thousands of kilometers. If the German troops encountered Siberian, Ural, and Trans-Baikal armies at the end of June, then their transfer to the west had not begun on June 22, but earlier.

The movement of the Soviet navy began at the same time as the movement of ground troops. Before the war, the Soviet Baltic fleet left the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland, heading west.⁴⁴ The fleet's objective was to act on the naval communication lines of the enemy.⁴⁵

Simultaneously with the transfer of ground troops and navy, an intensive relocation of aviation was taking place. During the dark early hours of the day, aviation divisions and regiments were transferred in small units to air bases, some of which were less than ten kilometers from the border. In addition to operational air force units, a rigorous transfer of the newest

airplanes to these units was under way. Colonel General L. M. Sandalov recounted: "From June 15, we began to receive new combat technology. Kobrinsky and Pruzhansky fighter regiments received the Iak-1 fighters, armed with cannon; the ground attack regiment got the Il-2 plane, the bomber regiments [got] the Pe-2."⁴⁶

Fighter regiments of that time had sixty-two planes each, ground attack regiments had sixty-three, and bomber regiments had sixty. Consequently, a single division (the 10th Mixed Air Force) was awaiting the arrival of 247 new planes. The general reported that the division did in fact begin to receive new technology, but old planes remained in the division. The division turned into a giant combat organism, comprised of several hundred planes. This process occurred everywhere. For example, the nearby 9th Mixed Air Force Division also received 262 new MiG-1s and MiG-3s, as well as several tens of Pe-2s and Il-2s.⁴⁷ On the morning of June 22, that same western front got an order to receive 99 MiG-3s at the Orsha airfield.⁴⁸ If they were to be received on the morning of June 22, the planes evidently were ready to be shipped out on the evening of June 21. Chief Marshal of Aviation A. A. Novikov reported that on June 21 the Northern Front, where he was commander of the air force, received a trainload of MiG-3 fighters.⁴⁹

Besides the fighter planes, a mighty stream of tanks, artillery, ammunition, and fuel was also flowing in. At dawn on June 22, a trainload of heavy artillery regiments came into the Siauliai station.⁵⁰ There were endless rows of trains full of ammunition. The *Krasnaya Zvezda* noted: "On the evening of June 21, 1941, the supervisor of the railroad station at Liepaja was told: 'Receive a special train. It carries ammunition. It must be sent to its destination as a matter of priority.'"⁵¹ Liepaja at that time was very close to the border, but the train was in transit, meaning it was going to the border lines.

Railroad cars on all fronts were full of ammunition, which was usually done in preparation for an offensive of great depth. In a defensive war, it was easier and cheaper to store ammunition in previously prepared storage depots. Having used up all the ammunition from one storage depot, the troops easily retreated to another, where ammunition awaited them, then to a third, and so on. But before an invasion, ammunition was loaded onto mobile transport, which was very risky and expensive. For example, the southwestern front had 1,500 railroad cars of ammunition at the small Kalinovka station alone.⁵² Colonel General I. I. Volkotrubenko reported that in 1941, after the German attack, the western front alone lost 4,216 railroad cars of ammunition.⁵³ There were five fronts, and it is incredible how much ammunition was stored on all fronts. Some of it fell into German hands; some of it was successfully rescued. In the middle of June, that incredible number of troops and ammunition—under the cover of the TASS announcement—was rolling toward the German borders in railroad cars.

Marshal of the Soviet Union S. K. Kurkotkin reported that in the beginning of June the "Soviet government, following a proposal by the General Staff, approved a plan to move 100,000 tons of fuel from the inland regions of the country."⁵⁴ In addition, "about 8,500 railroad cisterns with fuel [were] amassed at railroad intersections."⁵⁵ If the smallest 20-ton cisterns were being used, this would have meant much more than 100,000 tons. The most frequently used cistern in 1941 was the 62-ton. These 8,500 containers were at the stations waiting to be unloaded in the first days of the war. We also have to take into account all that was destroyed by enemy air raids at the railroad stations in the first minutes and hours of the

war. Colonel General I. V. Boldin, deputy commander of the Western Front, related that the 10th Army (the most powerful army on the Western Front) had sufficient supplies of fuel in storage and in railroad containers, but lost everything in the first minutes of the war.⁵⁶ On the eve of the war, this mass of cisterns was moving toward the borders, together with troops, military equipment, weapons, and ammunition.

June 13, 1941, marked the beginning of the biggest organized movement of troops, arms, ammunition, and other military supplies in history. Now is the right time to look once again at the TASS announcement of June 13. Many historians for some reason focus their attention on the introduction of this announcement, which speaks of German intentions. But the TASS announcement also speaks of Soviet intentions, and the most interesting information is contained there: "Rumors that the USSR is preparing for war against Germany are false and provocative. . . . The gathering of air forces and reserves of the Red Army and the impending maneuvers have as their objective nothing but [the] training of reserves and [the] testing of railroad functioning; they are conducted, as is known, yearly, so to imagine that these events are hostile to Germany is ridiculous." Comparing the announcement with what occurred in reality, we find a big discrepancy between words and deeds.

The TASS announcement talked about the "testing of railroad functioning." This is questionable. The movement of Soviet troops began in February, in March it intensified, in April and May it reached grandiose proportions, and starting on June 13, 1941, it reached an all-encompassing character. The only divisions that did not participate in the move were those already at the border, those that remained in the Far East, and those that were preparing to invade Iran. The full concentration of Soviet troops along the German border was planned for July 10.⁵⁷ For almost half a year, railroad transportation, the main means of transportation in the country, was paralyzed by secret troop transfers. In the first half of 1941, the government plan for industry was only fulfilled for the military requirements. The main reason was that transportation was almost exclusively used for secret military transfers. The second reason was the secret mobilization of the male population to the newly formed armies. The disruption of the government plan could hardly be called "testing."

The TASS announcement described it as "usual training," but Soviet marshals, generals, and admirals contradicted that claim. Major General S. Iovlev said: "The unusual aspect of the gatherings, not foreseen by plans of war readiness, alerted people."⁵⁸ Vice Admiral I. I. Azarov remembered: "Usually, training was conducted closer to the fall, but here they were beginning in the middle of the summer."⁵⁹ Colonel General I. I. Ludnikov said: "Usually, reserves are called in after the crops have been harvested. . . . In 1941, this rule was broken."⁶⁰

Major General M. I. Kazakov at that time was at the General Staff headquarters. There, he encountered the commander of the 16th Army, Lieutenant General M. F. Lukin, and other generals. Their armies were secretly being transferred by train; the commanders of the armies moved ahead of their troops and arrived in Moscow by airplane. In Moscow, they received their last instructions. General Kazakov said: "It was clear that it was not maneuvers they were going to. It was something else."⁶¹

Did Stalin have a premonition and concentrate troops along the borders for defense? That explanation is implausible. The massive operation described above couldn't be defensive. Troops preparing for defense dig themselves into the ground. They take over the largest fields that the enemy will have to cross, close off roads, establish barbwire barriers, dig anti-tank

trenches, and prepare covers behind the barricades. The Red Army did nothing of the kind. However, Soviet divisions, armies, and corps destroyed all previously constructed defensive structures. Troops were concentrated not behind water barriers, in a fashion convenient for defense, but in front of them, which was convenient for offense. Soviet troops did not take over vast fields that the enemy would need to cross, but hid in the woods, just like the German troops preparing for invasion. Perhaps all this was just a demonstration of might? Of course not—a demonstration has to be visible to the enemy. The Red Army, on the contrary, tried to hide its preparations. The TASS announcement was not written to scare Germany, but to allay its fears.

Words and Deeds

When trying to put together a clear picture of Hitler's National Socialism and Stalin's international socialism, we find surprising similarities not only in slogans, songs, and ideologies, but also in events. In the history of German National Socialism there was a moment very similar in spirit and meaning to the TASS Announcement of June 13, 1941. A year before, on May 8, 1940, German radio announced that the talk of two German armies being transferred to the border with Holland was a "ridiculous rumor," being circulated by "British inciters of war." After this, the German armies crushed and occupied Belgium, Holland, Luxemburg, and the greater part of France. The German radio announcement of May 8, 1940, and the TASS announcement of June 13, 1941, match almost word for word. Hitler did not believe Stalin's TASS announcement because he had himself disguised the preparations for a sudden attack using the same exact tricks.

The TASS announcement of June 13, 1941, was meant to stop rumors of imminent war between the USSR and Germany. Stalin decisively fought these rumors. The same problem stood before Hitler at the same time. Preparations for war are difficult to hide. People see them and express all sorts of hypotheses. On April 24, the German naval attaché in Moscow sent a warning report to Berlin, stating that he was combating "obviously ridiculous rumors of an impending German-Soviet war."¹ On May 2, Ambassador Schulenburg reported that he was also fighting rumors, but "everybody who comes to Moscow from Germany brings not just these rumors, but can even support them with evidence."² On May 24, the head of the foreign press department of the Ministry of Propaganda in Germany, Karl Bemer, in a drunken state said something undesirable about relations with the Soviet Union. He was arrested immediately. Hitler personally took care of this case and, according to Goebbels, gave this event "too much consideration." On June 13, 1941, on the day of the TASS announcement stating that there would be no war, Karl Bemer stood trial before the People's Court and said that his speech had been a drunken mistake: of course, there would be no war between Germany and the Soviet Union!

Just to make sure no doubts about this remained at home or abroad, on June 15, 1941, Ribbentrop, the German minister of foreign affairs, sent top secret telegrams to his ambas-

sadors: "There are plans [for] important talks with Moscow. [The] Fuehrer is going to sort out relations and raise new demands. Ambassadors must, in complete secrecy, relay this to the governments of the nations in which they are stationed. For example, the German ambassador in Budapest had to relay this piece of information, as a special secret, to the Hungarian president.³ The German leaders undertook a preplanned program of disinformation toward their own troops, their diplomats, and their military allies. The Soviet high command was doing the exact same thing.

Many people saw the transfer of Soviet troops to the borders. However, every person saw only a part of what was happening. Very few individuals conceived of its true scope. German military intelligence knew that a development of the might of the Red Army was occurring, but it only saw the first strategic echelon, without having any idea that there was a second one. Many Soviet marshals and generals, excluding those who were directly involved in the planning and commanding of the troop movement, also could not conceive of its true scope and, consequently, its meaning. Precisely for this reason, later on many of them freely talked about this transfer of troops. Their lack of knowledge of the whole situation and the true scale of concentration of Soviet troops is not at all coincidental; Stalin undertook draconian measures to keep all this secret. Stalin's TASS announcement was one of those measures. The fact of the transfer itself was impossible to hide, but the most important information—its size and its purpose—Stalin successfully hid from the entire nation, and even from future generations.

Colonel General of the Air Force A. S. Yakovlev (at the time personal advisor to Stalin) testifies that "at the end of May or beginning of June" a conference was held in the Kremlin regarding questions of concealment.⁴ Troops were told that they were going to training camps, although the higher command understood that they were not talking of training. In a defensive war or before its start there is no need to fool the troops—officers and soldiers are given a clear and precise objective: here is your line, do not take a single step back! Die here, but do not let the enemy through! If a defensive operation was being prepared, why not tell the troops: yes, comrades, the situation is tense, anything can happen, dig foxholes and sit in them. If troops were indeed being sent to dig foxholes, it would have made no difference whether the objective of their move was told after arrival or upon departure. But Soviet officers were not told so upon arrival or departure. A different task was set before them, which was concealed then and is still concealed now.

In order to understand the level of secrecy of the troop transfers, I will give one example: a district commander and his chief of staff did not know that some other troops were gathering on their territory. Marshal of the Soviet Union M.V. Zakharov tells us:

In the beginning of June, Colonel P. I. Rumiantsev, the chief of military communications of the Odessa military district, came to me, at that time chief of staff in Odessa, to my cabinet, and secretly reported that during the last few days *Annushkas* had been going through the Znamenka station from the direction of Rostov and were being unloaded in the Cherkassy region. *Annushka* is a term used in military communication to denote a division. Two days later, I received a cable from Cherkassy signed by the deputy commander of the Northern Caucasus military district, M. A. Reiter, in which he asked permission for the temporary use of several barracks of storage space in our district—to place materials arriving from the Northern Caucasus into the district. Because the staff of the Odessa military district was not informed about concentration of troops there, I contacted, using

high-frequency lines, the Operational Directorate of the General Staff.⁵ The deputy chief of the directorate, A. F. Anisov, came to the telephone. After telling him about the cable I received from Reiter, I asked for clarification. Anisov replied that Reiter's cable was to be immediately destroyed, that Reiter would receive the necessary orders from the General Staff, while the staff of the district should not get involved in this matter.⁶

The commander of the Odessa district, Colonel General I. T. Cherevichenko also knew nothing of the *Annushkas*.

Some Soviet marshals, including Zhukov, said that twenty-eight rifle divisions were moving out from the deeper inland territories of the country. This is true, but it is not the entire truth. Marshal A. M. Vassilevsky stressed that twenty-eight divisions only "laid the foundation for the execution of the troop gathering plan."⁷ Twenty-eight divisions were only the beginning. We know that there was a continuation, which surpassed the beginning, but Marshal Vassilevsky, after having spoken a little, grew silent and did not name concrete figures. If we compile all the data contained in all present-day military history works, we will find out that in May and June of 1941 seven armies were moved from the interior military districts to the western borders.⁸ Besides that, several independent corps were on their way west, including the 9th Special Rifle Corps, the 31st Rifle Corps, and the 27th Mechanized Corps. The total number of transferred divisions was seventy-seven, plus there was a huge number of independent combat and auxiliary formations.

On June 13, 1941, Molotov summoned the German ambassador and related to him the text of the TASS announcement.⁹ The announcement stated that Germany did not want to attack the USSR, and the USSR did not want to attack Germany, but "enemies of Germany and the USSR interested in unleashing and broadening war" were trying to make them quarrel and were spreading provocations and rumors of imminent war. In the announcement, these "enemy forces" are listed by name: "the British ambassador in Moscow, Mr. Kripps," "London," and "the English press." Our exploration of the day would not be complete if we do not turn to London on June 13, 1941.

It is reasonable to suppose that on June 13 there was a meeting in London between the Soviet ambassador I. M. Maysky and the British foreign minister Anthony Eden. Indeed, the meeting was held, and, surprisingly, in a friendly atmosphere. Discussion revolved around a serious issue: measures Britain would take to aid the Red Army "if in the near future a war between the USSR and Germany begins." Among other specific measures were military operations by the British air force, the transfer of military supplies, and the coordination of command between the two countries.¹⁰

On June 13, 1941, Stalin's diplomats were laying the foundation of what would soon be called the "Anti-Hitler Coalition." From the British point of view, there was nothing wrong with this picture: at that moment, Britain was involved in a war against Hitler, and had full rights to talk with anyone about joint efforts against him. But the Soviet Union had signed a pact of non-aggression with Germany, and immediately after that an agreement of friendship. If Soviet leadership thought that these documents no longer suited the situation at hand, they should have had them annulled. But Stalin did not do this; he assured Hitler of friendship and in the TASS announcement denounced the British ambassador and press for "wanting to broaden the war." At the same time, talks in London were under way concerning a military alliance with Germany's enemy, and about specific military measures against Germany.

It is surprising that at the talks in London both sides used the phrase “if war begins” instead of “if Germany attacks.” In other words, those talking did not exclude the possibility that the war would start not with German aggression, but in some other way. It is interesting that at the talks in London, the USSR was listed first: “if a war between the USSR and Germany occurs.” The same words were used in the TASS announcement: “rumors of imminent war between the USSR and Germany.” Why not say the opposite, between Germany and the USSR, if one supposes that Germany will be the aggressor?

Red Army, Black Gulag Uniforms

Immediately after the partition of Poland in the fall of 1939, a large number of Soviet troops were transferred from their permanent stations to the new borders. But the new territories were not adapted to the permanent deployment of large quantities of troops, especially troops with a lot of military equipment.

The *History of the Second World War* tells us: “The troops in [the] western border districts experienced many difficulties. Everything had to be built and equipped anew: bases and supply points, airfields, systems of roads, lines of communication.”¹ The official history of the Byelorussian military district says: “Movement of units from the district to western parts of Byelorussia caused considerable difficulties. . . . The personnel of the 3rd, 10th and 4th armies . . . were busy with repair work and building barracks, storages, [and] camps, [and] furnishing training sites, shooting ranges, and tank depots. The troops were under considerable strain.”² Colonel General L. M. Sandalov: “The movement of district troops here encountered huge difficulties. The barracks were miserably few. . . . For troops not provided with barracks, dugouts were being built.”³

But troops kept arriving. General Sandalov says that in order to house all the troops in 1939–40, storages, barracks, and any kind of space was being used. “A large amount of troops concentrated in Brest. . . . Four-tiered bunks were set up on the lower floors of the barracks.”⁴ Lieutenant General V. N. Kurdumov, the head of the Battle Training Directorate of the Red Army, had said in December 1940 at a meeting of the command staff that, in the new regions, troops often were forced to spend their time doing housework instead of military training.⁵ At the same meeting Lieutenant General I. N. Fedorenko, the head of the Automobile-Tank Directorate, said that almost all tank units in 1939–40 changed their positions, sometimes up to three or four times. As a result, “more than half of the units that moved to new places had no training ranges.”⁶ At the cost of tremendous effort, in 1939 and 1940 the troops of the First Strategic Echelon were set up and quartered. But from February 1941, at first slowly, then faster and faster, the seven armies of the Second Strategic Echelon began pouring into the same areas. At that moment, a change occurred that has not been

noticed by historians: Soviet troops stopped caring about how they would spend the coming winter. The troops of the First Strategic Echelon abandoned their dugouts and unfinished barracks and entered the border zone. We are talking of all the troops.⁷

Troops of the Second Strategic Echelon, moving from within the country, did not use the unfinished barracks and camps abandoned by the First Strategic Echelon. The arriving troops were not planning to spend the winter in these locations, and made no preparations for winter. They were not making dugouts or building training facilities and shooting ranges; they were not even digging foxholes.

Many official documents and memoirs of Soviet generals and marshals attest to the fact that now the armies were lodged in tents. In March 1941, the 118th Division of the 16th Rifle Corps of the 11th Army was formed in the Baltic region. In May, reserves arrived. The division put up a temporary summer camp made of tents in the Kozlovo Ruda region (45 to 50 km from the state border). Safe under the cover of the TASS announcement, the division abandoned this camp and headed for the border. Any attempt to find even a hint of preparations for winter is doomed to fail—the division was not preparing to spend the winter here. Right next to it moved the 28th Tank Division, and the picture was the same. In all tank divisions, all newly formed rifle divisions, the attitude toward winter changed—nobody feared winter any longer. Marshal of the Soviet Union K. S. Moskalenko (at the time Major General, commander of the 1st Motorized Artillery Anti-Tank Brigade of the Main Command Reserve) received an assignment from the commander of the 5th Army, Major General M. I. Potapov: “Your brigade began to form here. You will occupy that area of forest [and] set up a camp.” A powerful brigade of over six thousand men, with over a hundred heavy guns up to 85 mm in caliber, set up camp in three days. After this, intense battle training began: eight to ten hours a day, not counting night training, homework, maintenance of weapons, and weapon training.⁸

Where were they planning to spend the winter? Staying in tents in the Russian winter? Wasn't Central and Western Europe more comfortable?

Major General A. Zaporozhchenko gives the following description: “The final phase of the strategic deployment was the secret movement of attack groups to staging grounds for invasion. It was carried out during the course of several nights before the attack. The cover of the movement was organized by reinforced battalions that had previously been moved to the border and, before the arrival of the main forces, controlled the areas of the front pre-assigned for the divisions. Transfer of aviation began in the last days of May and ended by June 18. Fighter and ground-attack planes concentrated at air bases up to 40 km from the border, and the bombers were no further than 180 km.”⁹

In this description, we can be surprised only by the date of June 18. Soviet aviation did not complete its relocation then; it only started it on June 13 under the cover of the TASS announcement. Why is the general mentioning June 18? The thing is, he is talking not of the Red Army, but of the German *Wehrmacht*, where the same exact thing was occurring—troops were also moving toward the borders at night. Reinforced battalions were sent ahead. Arriving divisions took predesignated areas for attack, or simply put, hid in the forests. The actions of the two armies are mirror images of each other. The only difference is the dates. At first, the Soviet troops were ahead, but then Hitler got two weeks ahead of them—he had fewer troops, and they had less distance to cover. It is interesting that in the beginning of June the German army was in a very unfavorable position: it had troops in railroad trains. Guns

were in one train, shells in another. Battalions were unloaded where there were no staffs, staffs where there were no troops. There were no communication lines, since for safety reasons usage of many radio frequencies was banned. German troops also did not prepare dugouts and build training ranges.

But the most important similarity was the huge quantity of supplies, troops, aviation, hospitals, staffs, air bases—all this right on the Soviet borders, and very few people knew the plan of action, which was kept in extreme secrecy. All that we see in the Red Army and discount as stupidity was done, two weeks prior to that, in the German *Wehrmacht*. This is not stupidity, but preparation for invasion.

What was supposed to happen after the gathering of the Second Strategic Echelon of Soviet troops in the western districts of the country? The answer to this question was given long before the beginning of World War II. General V. Sikorsky: "Strategic waiting cannot last after all forces have been mobilized and concentration of troops achieved."¹⁰ This was said by the Chief of the General Staff of the Polish army, in the 1936 book *The Future War*. However, according to a decision of the Soviet General Staff, the book was published in Moscow for Soviet commanders. The book was published because Soviet military science had earlier reached the same conclusion: "In modern conditions the worst idea in the beginning stages of the war is to attempt to use a tactic of waiting."¹¹

The advancement of the Second Strategic Echelon was not a reaction to Hitler's actions. The creation of the Second Strategic Echelon began before the massive movements of German troops to the Soviet borders. The movement of the Second Strategic Echelon was a railroad operation that required lengthy preparations and extensive planning. Marshal S. K. Kurkotkin said that the General Staff transferred all necessary documents concerning the troop movements to the People's Commissariat of Transportation on February 21, 1941.¹² But the General Staff also needed time to meticulously prepare those documents; they needed to issue to the railroads precise orders about when, where, and what transport should be supplied, how to conceal loading and transfer, what routes to use, where to prepare areas for unloading the troops. In order to prepare all this, the General Staff had to determine exactly what troops had to appear, and where and at what time. This means that the decision to create the Second Strategic Echelon and the beginning of planning its movement and use for battle must have come sometime earlier.

The process of creating troop formations in inner districts and moving them to western border districts began on August 19, 1939. It originated with a decision by the Politburo; it was never stopped, and slowly gained momentum. Here is just one example: the Ural military district. At the end of August 1939 the 85th Division was formed; in September 1939, the 159th Division was formed. We see the 85th Division on June 21, 1941, right at the German borders in the region of Augustow, where the NKVD is cutting through barbed wire. The 159th Division we find right on the border as well, in the Rava-Russkaya region, in the 6th Army. In the same month of September 1939, in the same Ural district, the 125th and 128th Rifle Divisions were created, and each of them we can later find on the German borders. Moreover, according to Soviet sources, the 125th was "on the immediate borders" of East Prussia. The Ural district formed many other regiments and divisions, and all of them quietly crawled closer to the borders.

After the German invasion, the Second Strategic Echelon (as well as the first) was used for defense. But that does not at all mean that it was created for that purpose. General M. I.

Kazakov says of the second echelon: "After the beginning of the war, radical changes to the plans for its use had to be made."¹³ Major General V. Zemskov speaks more precisely: "We were forced to use these reserves not for attack, as planned, but for defense."¹⁴ General S. P. Ivanov: "If the troops of the First Strategic Echelon had been successful in . . . transferring the battle action to the enemy's territory before the deployment of the main forces, the Second Strategic Echelon had to fortify the efforts of the first echelon and develop a counterstrike according to the overall strategic plan."¹⁵ The term "counterstrike" should not add confusion. The Red Army always delivered a "counterstrike."

Lieutenant General S. A. Kalinin talks about the mood in the Second Strategic Echelon. Before the beginning of the secret movement west, he prepared the troops of the Siberian military district (later transformed into the 24th Army) for action. During the course of training, the general heard opinions from junior officers: "We probably won't need fortifications either. After all, we are getting ready not for defense, but for invasion, we will hit the enemy on his territory."¹⁶ All armies were prepared to fight "on enemy territory." The commander of the 16th Army of the Second Strategic Echelon, Lieutenant General M. F. Lukin, does not say exactly on what territory he planned to use the 16th Army that was under his command in 1941. But in any case, it was not Soviet territory: "We planned to fight on enemy territory."¹⁷ On the same page of the Soviet military journal where Lukin was quoted, Marshal A. M. Vassilevsky stresses that we should believe Lukin: "[T]here is much harsh truth in his words." Vassilevsky himself was a master at fighting "on enemy territory." It was he who carried out a surprise attack on Japanese troops in Manchuria in 1945, demonstrating the best example of how one has to deliver a sudden treacherous blow to the enemy's rear while he is occupied by war on other fronts.

From experience, as well as from theory, the Soviet High Command knew that not even one division could be left for a winter in the woods, unprepared. A soldier can spend the winter under any conditions—that was not the problem. The problem was that near the western borders there were no shooting ranges, no training camps, no tank depots, and no conditions for battle training. Troops must either immediately enter combat, or inevitable degradation of the level of battle readiness would ensue. The Soviet High Command knew that the culprits would be found, and they knew what the fate of the culprits would be—yet they took practically the entire Red Army into places where there were no conditions for battle training. The Soviet High Command did not fear Stalin's ire, because the move forward did not endanger the troops' combat readiness. Stationing them under such poor conditions was planned for a very short time only, after which the Red Army would attack westward.

Stalin had no choice. He could not turn his armies around. Many armies and corps created in the first half of 1941 had nowhere to turn back to. Another troop transfer would have required many more months, would have paralyzed the entire railroad system, and would have meant economic catastrophe. Moreover, what sense does it make first to spend half a year gathering troops, and then half a year dispersing them? Even if, after a full concentration, an immediate dispersion had begun, even then the process could not have been finished before the arrival of winter. Besides, Stalin kept the process of creation and transfer to the west of the entire Second Strategic Echelon strictly secret. Could he have counted on full secrecy, if he left these armies for several weeks in the border forests?

If the Red Army could not turn back and could not stay in the border regions for long, what was left for it to do? In order to answer this question one needs to bring up the

opinion of Stalin: "In the condition when we are surrounded by enemies, a sudden attack from our side, an unanticipated maneuver, quickness, decides everything."¹⁸ In every grandiose process, there is a critical moment, after which events cannot be turned back. For the Soviet Union, this moment came on June 13, 1941. After this day, war for the Soviet Union became inevitable, and it was to be in the summer of 1941, regardless of Hitler's actions.

In the Second Strategic Echelon, which Stalin was secretly transferring to the borders, there were entire divisions, sometimes even corps, of soldiers dressed in old black uniforms. There were enough of these soldiers for the German military intelligence to notice and unofficially dub these divisions and corps "black." One example was the 69th Rifle Corps of the 20th Army. This corps was not the only one. The 63rd Corps of the 21st Army also figures in German documents as the "black corps." The commander of the 63rd Rifle Corps was *Komkor* (Corps Commander) L. G. Petrovsky. During the war *Komkor* Petrovsky fought with dignity and courage, proving his ability as a great strategist in battle. On July 31, 1941, he received the rank of lieutenant general and was promoted to command the 21st Army while the 63rd Rifle Corps, after heavy fighting, was encircled by the enemy. Stalin ordered him to leave the 63rd Corps encircled and to take command of the 21st Army. Petrovsky asked to delay the order of entering his post as army commander for a couple days, and the plane sent for him returned with critically wounded soldiers on board. Petrovsky brought his "black corps" out of encirclement and once again returned to the rear of the enemy, in order to bring another division out of encirclement, the 154th Rifle Division (under the command of Major General S. Fokanov). During the breakout from encirclement, Petrovsky was fatally wounded. German troops, upon finding and recognizing Petrovsky's body on the battlefield, gave the Soviet general a funeral with all military honors. A huge cross was placed on his tomb, with an inscription in German that read: "Lieutenant General Petrovsky, commander of the 'black corps.'"

The unusual black uniform was noted by the German intelligence in other units of the Second Strategic Echelon as well. When this uniform dominated over the usual green one, then regiments, divisions, and sometimes entire corps received the name "black." The 24th Army of the Second Strategic Echelon, secretly advancing out of Siberia, was no exception. During the fighting, several of its corps and divisions got called "black" by the Germans. By the end of June, the trains of this army stretched across thousands of kilometers. At that time Lieutenant General S. A. Kalinin, the commander of the army, was already in Moscow, working on the problem of how to feed the 24th Army. After the first few battles, the 24th Army found itself in the right hands: Major General of the NKVD Constantin Rakutin took the command. Lieutenant General S. A. Kalinin returned to Siberia. Kalinin, on Stalin's orders, formed ten new divisions. He said: "Units were formed in locations that previously had no military units at all. I began my work by visiting these locations. My first flight was to one of the towns in Siberia. Some years before the war, in the dense forests there, a village of barracks was built for lumberjacks. We used it for housing the units of the forming armies. The village was surrounded almost from all sides by impenetrable taiga."¹⁹ Everything about "barrack villages for lumberjacks" can be found in the three volumes of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's book *The Gulag Archipelago*. The result was that ten new divisions (over 130,000 men) assembled in the Siberian military district not in locations previously established for military units, but in "barrack villages." These people were the Soviet prisoners. That is why the regiments and divisions of this army and other armies of the Second Strategic Echelon were clothed in black:

“lumberjacks” were frequently not even issued military uniforms. That was why Stalin had replaced the commander of the 24th Army with the “chekist” Rakutin.²⁰

The armies of the Second Strategic Echelon, which included the “black” divisions and corps, began forming in June 1941. These divisions and corps began their movement west on June 13, 1941. German troops encountered the “black” divisions and corps in early July 1941. Every army of the Second Strategic Echelon was created specifically for the purpose of a surprise arrival at the western borders. Each army was located on a major railroad route. Each was formed in the vicinity of concentration camps: men there were used to order, didn’t ask for much, and it was easier to take them out of the camps than out of the villages—all were already gathered in one place, organized into brigades, and, most importantly, it was impossible to take men out of the villages without stirring rumors about mobilization and war. Stalin needed everything to proceed quietly, without rumors. That was why he wrote the TASS announcement. That was why men were in due time taken to concentration camps, trained and disciplined, and then sent to the front without fuss. If in early July the German army met divisions and corps filled with inmates, in the armies coming from the faraway Urals and from the Siberian and Trans-Baikal provinces, it means that Stalin handed weapons to the inmates before June 22, 1941. The main question that German command had to answer was: If we do not attack, what will Stalin do? Take away the weapons from the inmates, return them to the GULAG, or send them home? Or perhaps Stalin had some other options for using the armed inmates that were secretly gathering at the German borders?

Military Alignment

Hitler, herded into a corner and full of fear, in June 1941 decided to turn east, and attack the Soviet Union.

—BASIL HENRY LIDDELL HART

In September 1939, as a result of the Red Army's "war of liberation" in Poland, the new western border of the Soviet Union advanced in such a way that the so-called Belostok bulge formed in Byelorussia—a powerful wedge that, like a ship's bow, broke into the territory occupied by Germany. The same thing happened in the Lvov region—there, another powerful wedge of Soviet territory formed. The Belostok and Lvov bulges were like two Soviet peninsulas in the German sea. Basic military logic dictated: if the Red Army intended to defend itself, it could not keep troops in the Belostok and Lvov bulges. Already, in peacetime, enemy troops surrounded the Soviet army on three sides in the bulges. The Soviet flanks were open and vulnerable. A sudden and decisive German attack on the flanks in these bulges would have cut off the best sections of the Red Army from the main forces and supply bases. In the event of an enemy invasion, such an alignment of Soviet troops inevitably and immediately would have led to catastrophe.

That is exactly what happened in 1941. Before the German invasion into the territory of the Kiev military district, the most powerful Soviet front was deployed: the Southwestern Front. The three most powerful armies of that front were in the Lvov bulge. In peacetime, these three armies were already almost surrounded. Hitler only had to shut the trap on them. On June 22, the very weak 1st German Tank Group hit Lutsk, Rovno, and Berdichev, quickly cutting off all three Soviet armies in the Lvov bulge—the 12th (mountain), 6th, and 26th. The 1st Tank Group, faced with open, unprotected operational space, immediately went through the Soviet rear, crushing air bases, staffs, and hospitals. Here, in the rear, they found tremendous quantities of Soviet weapons, fuel, ammunition, foodstuffs, and medical supplies. The Germans seized truly remarkable trophies. The three Soviet armies in the Lvov bulge were left with a problem that had two solutions, both of which were catastrophic: either

remain in the trap and wait for the 1st Tank Group to completely lock the encirclement, or run to the east, abandoning everything that cannot be carried. They ran. Soon, they were left without fuel and ammunition. The entire Soviet Southwestern Front crumbled from one rather weak blow. But that was not all: this same blow threatened the entire Southern Front.

Having broken through to open space, the 1st German Tank Group could have freely chosen any direction: all roads were open. It could have struck the rear of the Southern Front. It could have headed to Kiev. If Kiev was being defended it could, instead of engaging in battle, have hit the metal-producing sites of the Ukraine: Dnepropetrovsk, Dneprodzerzhinsk, Zaporozhye. Once there, it could have reached the Crimea. It could have gone to the bases of the Black Sea fleet and taken them. Or it could have taken the largest hydroelectric plant in Europe, DneproGES. It could have crossed the Dnepr and taken Donbass—the largest coal region of the Soviet Union. It was also possible to continue to the North Caucasus toward the main petroleum sources of the Soviet Union. But Hitler was preparing for war in a very strange manner: so many open directions, and he only had one tank group against all of Ukraine, Moldavia, Crimea, Donbass, Don, North Caucasus, and Trans-Caucasus—with only 799 obsolete and worn-out tanks. The First Tank Group fought fierce battles on the western bank of the Dniepr River, then crossed the Dniepr and joined the Second Tank Group. This was how four armies of the Soviets were encircled; 664,000 prisoners were taken, and with them huge quantities of arms and supplies. But the Germans paid for this grandiose bounty by losing the tempo of their attack: it happened in September, so they could not start moving toward Moscow before October, which meant rain, dirt, and mud. No blitzkrieg was possible in the remaining months of 1941.

In Byelorussia, the Red Army had an even worse time. The Western Front had four armies. The main forces of the front were concentrated in the Byelostok bulge. Two German tank groups struck the undefended flanks and linked east of Minsk. The 3rd, 10th, and parts of the 4th and 13th armies, all together almost thirty divisions, found themselves in a pocket. The Western Front collapsed even quicker than the Southwestern and the Southern Fronts. Could it be that before the war General Zhukov did not understand that one cannot herd huge numbers of troops into bulges that become traps?

The answer to this question was given by one of the most brilliant Soviet troop commanders, the deputy commander of the Volkhov front Lieutenant General Andrey Vlassov. On June 22, 1941, he was a major general in command of the 4th Mechanized Corps in the Lvov bulge. In 1942 he was ordered to command the 2nd Shock Army, which found itself in a hopeless position. Vlassov was ordered to complete an operation that he had not prepared, had not started, and that had already failed. The 2nd Shock Army could not be saved. It perished, and Vlassov was taken prisoner. In a protocol from questioning on August 8, 1942, it was recorded: “Regarding the question of whether Stalin had intentions to attack Germany, Vlassov declared that such intentions, undoubtedly, existed. The concentration of troops in the Lvov region points to the fact that a strike against Romania was being planned in the direction of the petroleum sources. . . . The Red Army was not prepared for the German invasion. Despite all the rumors about the operations conducted by Germany, in the Soviet Union nobody believed in such a possibility. During preparations, the Russians meant only their own offensive.”¹ There is no other explanation for the concentration of Soviet troops in the Lvov and Byelostok bulges.

Forty-nine years later the same explanation was given by the Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Military Forces, General Makhmut Gareev: “A main blow to the flank in the main alignment of the enemy’s troops, delivered in the direction of Krakow, would have allowed us to cut Germany off from the Balkans in the very beginning of the war, to deprive her of the Romanian oil, and to separate the allies. On the other hand, carrying out the main blow on the joint flanks of the western and northwestern fronts led to a frontal attack in difficult conditions against heavily fortified defense positions in East Prussia, where the German army could offer fiercer resistance. And totally different conditions, and consequently different objections, could have arisen if the strategic plans were to lead defensive operations to deflect aggression early in the war. In this case, no doubt, it was more advantageous to have main forces in the strip of the western front. But such a course of strategic actions was not planned.”²

Let’s compare the opinions of the two generals. They are saying the same thing: there was no preparation for defense, only offense, moreover, an offensive in the southwestern direction (that is, from the Lvov bulge) with the objective of cutting Germany off from her oil suppliers and main allies. If someone places on the map the Soviet Shock armies, mechanized and airborne corps, air bases, staffs, and Zhukov’s generals, he will be forced to acknowledge, even without Vlassov and Gareev’s testimonies, that such positioning of troops in the bulges directed toward the enemy could only lead to catastrophe in the event of an invasion by the enemy, while it would lead to a brilliant victory in the event that the Red Army was first to deliver its sudden crushing blow.

Between the Baltic and Black Seas lie the impassible swamps of Polesye. This is the largest area of swamps in Europe. These swamps divided the entire theater of military operations into two regions, two strategic directions. An enemy advancing toward Russia from the west must choose the direction of his main blow: he can go to the north of Polesye, or to the south. Traditionally, conquerors advancing from the west went north of Polesye: Warsaw-Brest-Litovsk-Minsk-Smolensk—this is a direct route to Moscow. The question before Hitler’s strategists was: where to plan the primary blow, north of Polesye or south? Hitler’s strategists decided that the primary blow was to come to the north, the secondary to the south. In 1941 Hitler had four tank groups. Three of them were designated for action north of Polesye, and one to the south.

Soviet military intelligence knew of the concentration of German troops and knew that three tank groups would act against the Baltic and Byelorussian areas, while only one would go against the Ukraine. What should the Soviet command have done? Since the Germans prepared the primary blow to the north of the swamps, the main forces of the Red Army should also have been placed there—in the western direction. Even if Soviet intelligence had not known anything about Hitler’s plans, the main forces should have been kept in the western direction. It is obvious even to the lowest ranking officer that the direct route to Moscow runs through Byelorussia and Smolensk.

Troop alignment is, figuratively speaking, equal to positioning chess figures on the board. The General Staff is the brain of the army. The Chief of the General Staff is the most capable and smartest general in the entire army. Starting in February 1941, Zhukov was chief of the General Staff. Here is the situation we are examining: on June 22, the Germans delivered the primary blow north of Polesye and crushed Soviet armies in the Belostok bulge, from where the German tank groups could head toward Smolensk and Moscow. Meanwhile,

Zhukov's main forces were not there, but south of Polesye. The direction facing the greatest threat was north of the swamps. Conquerors from the west have always advanced to the north, but Zhukov deployed his main alignment to the south.

The consequences of Zhukov's positioning were catastrophic. In order to divert the attack on Moscow, the Red Army had to send, urgently and under heavy enemy bombers' raids, railway trains with divisions, corps, and armies from the Southwestern Front to the Western Front. There, again under heavy bombing, the trains were unloaded and the troops went straight into battle. What happened was that the 16th Army was advanced from the Trans-Baikal region to Ukraine, meaning south of Polesye. The army had just begun to unload when the German invasion happened. They were forced to urgently load the 16th Army back into trains and herd it several hundred kilometers to the north. The staff of the 16th Army arrived at Smolensk from Ukraine and began to unload, but the communications battalion could not be found. Without communications, it is impossible to command troops. An entire army found itself without command. This is what must be called a "headless army." The culprit here is not Stalin, but Zhukov, who in May and early June moved a large part of the armies of the second strategic echelon to the south of Polesye, instead of to the north.

This is just one example, there are plenty more. The 19th Army was secretly moved from the North Caucasus to Ukraine, in other words, south of Polesye. This army also began to unload. It was ordered to get back on the trains and sent to Smolensk. The same thing happened: the artillery was unloaded in one place, while the trains with shells had not yet arrived. Tanks were there, but the repair crews had not arrived. The division staffs were there, but the troops were still far behind. What was General Zhukov thinking about before the German invasion? Why was the strongest Soviet military district before the war not the Western district, which was in the most threatened area, but the Kiev district? If Zhukov had been thinking of defense, he of course would have deployed the most powerful Soviet groupings in the most threatened areas—north of Polesye.

But Zhukov was not thinking of defense, and was not planning for it. There is plenty of testimony that right before the invasion Zhukov, Vatutin, Vasilevsky, and all the generals and officers of the General Staff worked sixteen and seventeen hours a day without weekends or holidays. "The areas for the concentration of primary efforts were not chosen by the Soviet commanders in the interests of strategic defense operations (such an operation was simply not foreseen and not planned), but for entirely different means of action," wrote Gareev.³

If we prepare to deliver a sudden all-crushing blow to Germany and her allies, we must also choose the direction of the primary attack: north of Polesye, or south. If we attack to the north, we find ourselves in East Prussia, which is heavily fortified and populated with Germans who will offer resistance. In this area we can only advance from east to west along the shores of the Baltic Sea, so all the rivers and streams would have to be crossed in their lower currents, almost at their mouths. Among those rivers, there are two powerful water barriers: the Vistula and the Oder. In their middle, and especially in their lower currents, they are extremely difficult to cross. However, if we strike south of Polesye the picture changes. In this case, the Red Army would end up in the Krakow region. It is inhabited by Poles who, after two years of German occupation, would have met any other army with flowers and offers of help. Here, on the Polish plains, there are no formidable modern fortifications. Here one does not need to expend efforts to cross rivers. In their upper currents they do not pose serious barriers. If one carries out the attack south of Polesye, then during the advancement his left

flank will be defended by the mountains of Slovakia, primarily by the Tatra Mountains which are up to 2,500 meters tall. Advancing troops would only need to worry about securing one flank; the other would be covered.

An attack on Krakow out of Lvov would have divided Hitler's coalition, cutting Germany off from all her eastern allies: Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. An attack south of Polesye—and this is the most important point—would have cut Germany off from her primary source of petroleum: Romania. The delivery of just this one strike would have immediately secured the Soviet Union's victory in World War II. Further on from the Krakow region, it was best to turn north. In this case, the Red Army troops could freely advance to the Baltic Sea, cutting the German army off from Berlin and the inner regions of Germany. This would have formed a corridor, in which the Red Army had no threats: to the left, advancing Soviet divisions, corps, and armies would have been covered by the Oder River right up to the sea, and to the right—by the Vistula River. German counterattacks here would have been impossible. This is exactly what Stalin was preparing in the first half of 1941. The plan of such an operation is a picture of diabolical strategic beauty.

Churchill's Warning and Stalin's Reaction

Can Churchill be trusted in this matter? He is interested in making us clash with the Germans as soon as possible. Isn't it so?

—VYACHESLAV MOLOTOV, IN *MOLOTOV: MASTER OF HALF A DOMAIN*

For more than half a century, historians have been saying that Churchill warned Stalin about the impending German invasion, but Stalin ignored his warnings. Perhaps we should ask a different question: Why should Stalin have believed Churchill?

Churchill was one of the most powerful political leaders who had understood the great threat posed by Communism back in 1918. He invested considerable effort in helping the Russian people get rid of that regime. His efforts turned out to be insufficient but still, Churchill did more for the destruction of Communism than all other world leaders. Churchill was an open enemy of the Communists, and never tried to hide that fact. But all of a sudden in 1941, Churchill rushed to warn Stalin, the most powerful Communist in the world, that Hitler posed a danger to the Soviet Union.

From the Soviet point of view, Churchill could have had only one political motive: to deflect the German attack to anywhere other than Britain. Even before World War II began, on March 10, 1939, at the Eighteenth Congress of the Communist Party, it had been openly declared that Great Britain wanted to trigger a war between the Soviet Union and Germany, while it remained on the sidelines of this fight. We do not know whether that was indeed Churchill's intention, but it was exactly how Stalin interpreted every action of British leadership and diplomacy. As Admiral N. G. Kuznetsov put it, "Stalin, of course, had more than enough grounds for thinking that England and America were seeking to have us collide head-on with Germany."¹ Upon receiving any letter from Churchill, Stalin, without reading it, could guess its contents.

To understand Stalin's suspicion of Churchill's letters, we must also examine the strategic situation in Europe. The concentration of power against weakness was the main principle of strategy. Germany was unable to apply this principle in World War I, because it was fight-

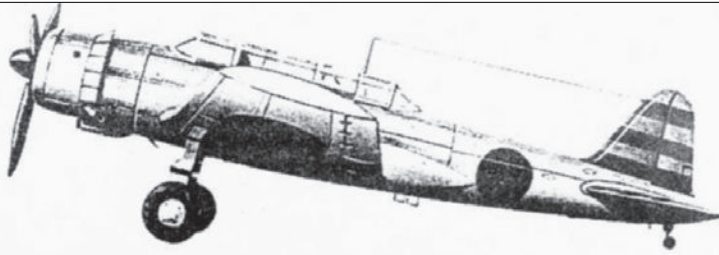
ing on two fronts. Attempts to concentrate great efforts on one front automatically led to the weakening of the other front, and the enemy immediately exploited it. As a result, Germany had to renounce a strategy of destruction in favor of the only other alternative, a strategy of attrition. But Germany's resources were limited, in contrast to the resources of its enemies. A war of attrition could only end in catastrophe for Germany.

Both the German General Staff and Hitler himself understood that a war on two fronts would be catastrophic for Germany. Speaking at a meeting with the High Command of the German armed forces on November 23, 1939, Hitler said that a war against the Soviet Union could only begin after the war in the west had ended. In 1939 and 1940, Germany always fought on only one front. The German General Staff was able to apply the concentration principle brilliantly, thrusting the enormous German military power first against one enemy, then against another. The main problem facing German strategy was to prevent war from breaking out on a second front. As long as the Germans were fighting on one front only, they won brilliant victories. Two fronts meant abandoning all strategic principles, regressing from the strategy of crushing to the strategy of attrition. It would spell the end of the blitzkrieg, and would mean catastrophe.

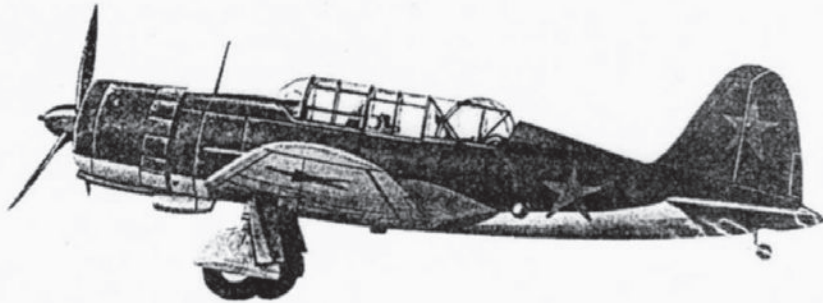
In 1940, in terms of strategy, Churchill could only have dreamt that the war Germany was fighting would transform from a one-front war into a two-front war. It was the only way to save Great Britain. In May 1940, the British army suffered a crushing defeat unprecedented in history. The German tank divisions broke through to La Manche, and trapped forty British, French, and Belgian divisions against the coastline in the region around Dunkirk. The British troops managed to evacuate to Britain from France in early June 1940, but the losses were horrendous. They had left all their military equipment on the French coast, all their tanks, artillery tows, 63,000 automobiles, and more than half a million tons of ammunition and supplies. The human casualties of the British army totaled more than 68,000. After leaving the continent, the British army was left practically without heavy weapons. Fewer than one hundred obsolete tanks were left on the British Isles.²

Belgium capitulated on May 28. France fell on June 22, 1940. Hitler's troops reached the shores of the Atlantic Ocean and took over naval bases of tremendous strategic value. From this time, the piracy of German U-boats increased sharply on the sea routes. Britain, an island nation, faced the threat of a naval blockade and the most acute crisis in trade, industry, and finance. Worse still, the German military machine, which at that point seemed invincible, was making intensive preparations to land on the British Isles. It was in this environment that Churchill wrote to Stalin on June 25, 1940. On June 30, the German armed forces captured Guernsey, one of the Channel Islands. In almost a thousand years of British history, this was the first time since 1066, meaning after the Norman conquest of Britain, that an enemy had captured a part of the British Isles. What would follow—a German occupation of mainland Britain? Guernsey was taken without resistance. For how long could Britain resist?

Stalin received Churchill's message the day after Germany had seized Guernsey. What were Churchill's interests? Did he want to save the British Empire or the dictatorship in the Soviet Union? For Stalin, Churchill was not an unbiased observer who, out of friendly sentiments, was warning of danger, but a man who desperately needed help and allies in a conflict against a fearful enemy. Stalin therefore was very suspicious of Churchill's letters.



Японский самолет «Накадзима» Б5Н2. (Вес — 3,8 тонны. Макс. скорость — 378 км/ч. Дальность полета — 2000 км. Боевая нагрузка — 1 торпеда 800 кг).



Советский самолет «Иванов», или СУ-2. (Вес — 4 тонны. Макс. скорость — 486 км/ч, дальность полета 1200 км, бомбовая нагрузка — 600 кг).

The Japanese Nakajima B-5N2. The Japanese used these planes in their surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. By the end of the 1930s the Soviet Union developed the Su-2 (Ivanov). Soviet designers were not aware of the Japanese plane, but in both countries identical planes were developed. Stalin was planning to use the Su-2 against the Germans in the same way the Japanese used the Nakajima against the U.S.



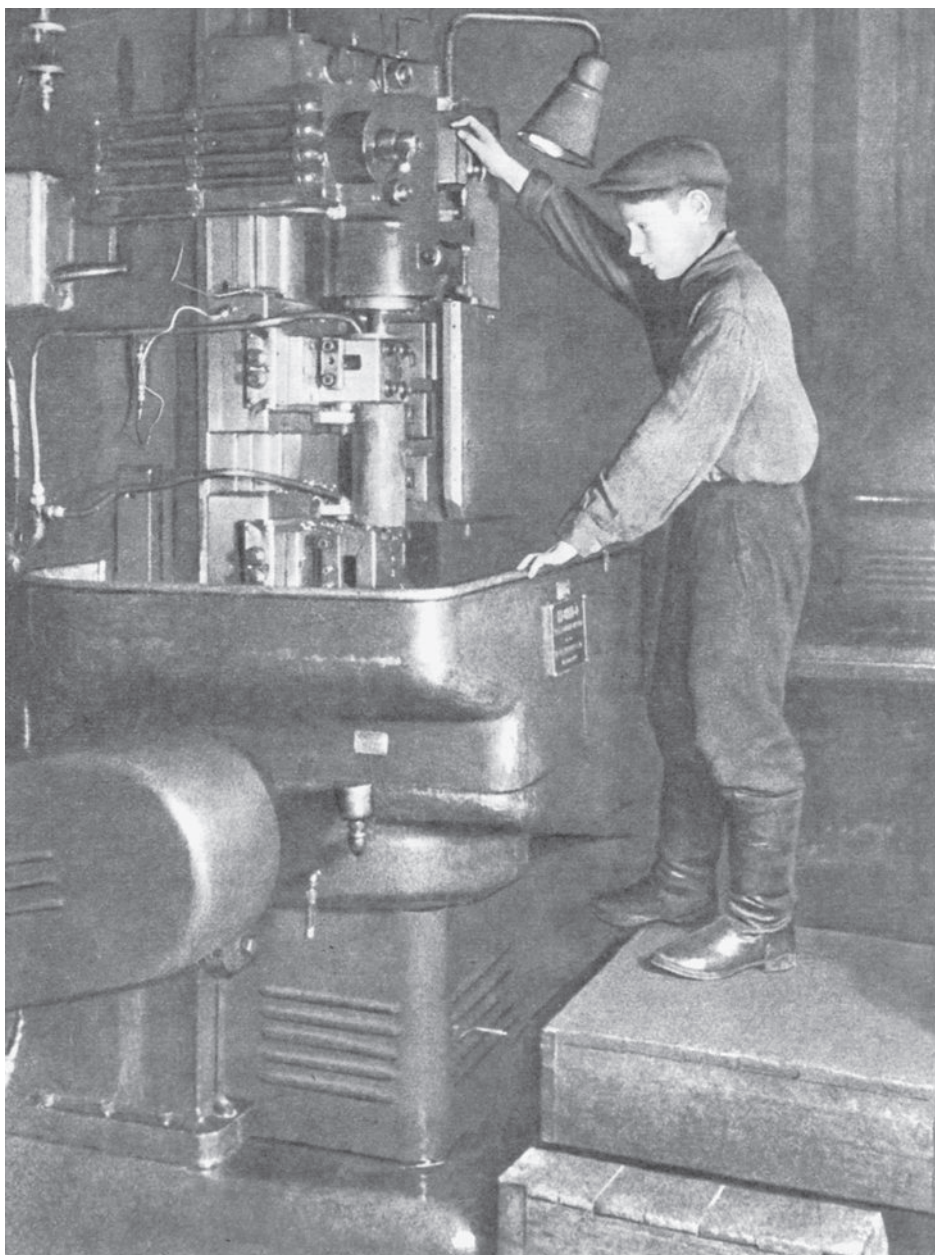
A close-support and anti-tank warplane, the Il-2 was the most produced aircraft in military history. Stalin was prepared to attack first. His focus was not on building interceptors to protect against an enemy strike but on warplanes that could support a first strike.



An 8-inch Howitzer B-4. Each projectile weighed 220 pounds. These guns were needed primarily for an offensive war in order to break hardened enemy defenses or during an assault on cities. By the summer of 1941 the Red Army had concentrated hundreds of them on the German border, each with a supply of six hundred rounds of ammunition. In a defensive war, they proved to be of little use, until 1944 when the Red Army crossed into Germany for the final offensive of the war.



The Red Army was trained to cross rivers, a key element in an offensive war. In a defensive war a retreating army uses its own bridges and then destroys them.



In 1940 Soviet industry was converted to wartime production. Under Stalin's orders millions of teenagers were mobilized into "Labor Reserves" that provided slave labor for military factories. Defection from the Labor Reserves was punishable by a military court-martial and the death sentence.



In the spring of 1941 the Supreme Soviet commanders spent long weeks on the Soviet Union's western border. People's Commissar of Defense Marshal S. K. Timoshenko and Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Army, General Georgi Zhukov, on the Romanian border. This is not where Hitler attacked, but an area where the Soviet offensive against Germany was to be launched.



In 1941 the major means of German army transportation was horse-driven wagons and carts, rarely shown in World War II newsreels.



*Even heavy artillery
was transported
by horses.*



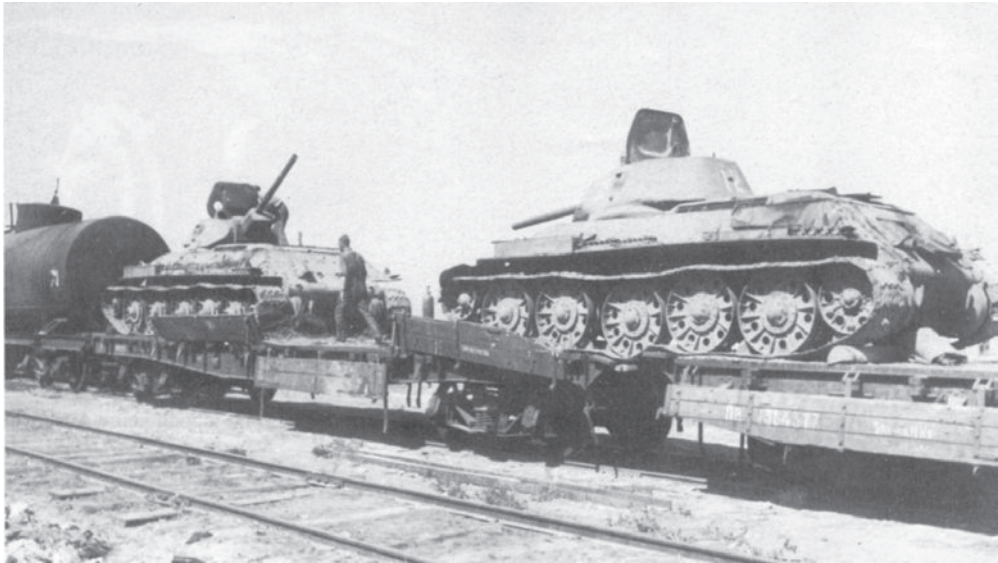
Soviet attack aircraft massed at airfields close to the western border were vulnerable to Hitler's first strike on June 22 and were destroyed on the ground, wing-tip to wing-tip, in a massive bonfire of aircraft.



In Byelorussia the Red Army abandoned twenty-five thousand railroad cars of artillery ammunition close to the border. Why were they placed there? Why were they on railroad cars? Where were they heading?



T-34 tanks, abandoned by the Red Army in the summer of 1941, fought under the German flag for the rest of World War II.



While the Soviet Union was claiming friendship with Hitler in a deceptive June 13 TASS announcement, Stalin was massing Soviet troops near the western borders. The Germans attacked while the Soviet troops were still moving forward by rail. Once the tracks were destroyed the tanks could not be unloaded and the best ones, the T-34s, were left as a present for Hitler.



Even the best German Panzer divisions were using Soviet T-34 tanks.



Among millions of Soviet prisoners of war was Stalin's son, Yacov Dzhughashvili. A letter from one of his friends, dated June 21, was found in his pocket. It described an upcoming "stroll to Berlin." By striking first Hitler spoiled the stroll.



Soviet troops of the Second Strategic Echelon, drafted from Gulag prisoners, surrender without a fight. Stalin said that if the fire is good even wet logs can burn in the blaze, but if the fire is weak a wet log will not help. If the Soviet first strike had succeeded, the poorly trained and equipped Gulag-drafted soldiers would have fought well. But when the Germans struck first the skeletons from the Gulag were useless.

Released Gulag prisoners had no time to change into new uniforms, and were captured by the Germans in their prison garb at the front. Entire regiments, divisions, and even corps were dressed in the black clothes of prisoners. The Germans called them "Black Divisions." Why would Stalin move his prisoners from the Siberian labor camps to the border and give them weapons, if not to attack Hitler?



Hitler's army was totally unprepared for war in the Soviet Union. The German army was not properly equipped to fight in the frost, snow, and mud of the Russian winter. Even with the most optimistic scenario, Hitler could not have conquered all of the Soviet Union in one summer.



Russian soldiers were wearing sheepskin coats. War could not be fought in Russia without these coats and the Germans did not have them. That is why Stalin did not believe that Hitler would strike first while he was still totally unprepared for a war that would have to last longer than a summer campaign.

Churchill wrote several letters to Stalin. But unfortunately they all reached Stalin at times when Churchill was in dire straits. The best-known letter in this series reached Stalin on April 19, 1941. Churchill wrote this letter on April 3 and requested the British ambassador in Moscow, Sir Stafford Cripps, to immediately hand it to Stalin in person. But neither Stalin nor Molotov would receive the ambassador. Finally, on April 19, Cripps did not hand but transmitted the message, and not to Stalin, but only to Andrei Vyshinsky, Deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs. On April 22, Vyshinsky informed the ambassador that Churchill's message had been handed to Stalin.

By the time Stalin received the letter, the British situation had exacerbated, compared with the time when the letter was written. The German army seized Belgrade on April 13 and headed south, posing threats to British troops in the Balkans. Rommel's tank divisions reached the Egyptian border in the area of Bardia and Es-Sallum on April 12. If they broke through to the Suez Canal, the main artery connecting the British Empire would be cut. Yugoslavia surrendered to Germany on April 17. The road to Greece was open. St. Paul's Cathedral in London was damaged in an air raid on April 16. In April, Greece was on the verge of surrender. On April 18, Korizis, the Greek prime minister, committed suicide. After that, the capitulation talks commenced. On April 23, the Greek armed forces surrendered. British troops there were in a catastrophic position, and the question was whether or not they could be evacuated. In this context, Stalin received the most important of Churchill's letters.

On May 20, 1941, the German armed forces started the most massive airborne operation in German military history to capture Crete. There were 32,000 British and 14,000 Greek troops on the island. Several days later, without having superiority in numbers, German paratroops took control of the island and annihilated the more numerous British and Greek forces. Military experts unanimously concluded that the taking of Crete was an ingenious rehearsal by Hitler's paratroops before landing on the British Isles. On May 24, 1941, the largest ship of the British fleet in the Atlantic, the battle cruiser *Hood*, clashed with the *Bismarck*, Germany's largest battle ship. The battle lasted eight minutes. One direct hit to the British ship caused it to explode and sink in a matter of minutes. Out of the 1,421 crew members, only three survived. In June 1941, German U-boats sank sixty-one British merchant ships, totaling 431,000 tons.³

Churchill wrote his first long letter to Stalin on June 25, 1940, when neither Hitler nor the German generals had any intention of invading the Soviet Union. The plan for Operation Barbarossa or any other plan for war against the Soviet Union simply did not exist. Churchill's letters were not based on knowledge of German plans, but on sound calculations. He simply directed Stalin's attention to the situation in Europe: today Britain had problems with Hitler; tomorrow it would inevitably be the Soviet Union's turn. Churchill urged Stalin to unite with him against Hitler, and to lead the Soviet Union into the war on the side of Great Britain and all of vanquished Europe.

The text of Churchill's message received in Moscow on April 19, 1941, can be found in hundreds of Soviet books and articles. Here it is: "I have received reliable information from a trustworthy source that the Germans, after deciding that Yugoslavia had fallen into their clutches on 20 March, began to transfer three armoured divisions, of the five stationed in Romania, into the southern part of Poland. As soon as they learnt of the Serbian revolution, this transfer was cancelled. Your Excellency will easily appreciate the significance of these

facts.” All Soviet sources publish Churchill’s message in this form, insisting and assuring that it was a “warning.”

I see no warning here. Churchill was talking about three tank divisions—many by Churchill’s standards, but by Stalin’s, it was not a great deal. Stalin himself at the time was secretly setting up sixty-three tank divisions, each of which was stronger than a German division both in number and in quality of tanks. Mass production of tanks was already set up in the Soviet Union at that time, and they remained the best in the world throughout the war. Nobody in the world, all through the war, created anything even close to the tanks that Stalin had before the war even began. Having received a report about three German divisions, why should Stalin have guessed that there would be an invasion? If the report about the three tank divisions was sufficient “warning” about preparations of aggression, we should not accuse Hitler of being the aggressor: German intelligence gave Hitler reports about tens of Soviet tank divisions grouping along the German and Romanian borders.

Churchill suggested that Stalin assess “the significance of these facts.” How could they be assessed? Poland, historically, has always been the gate through which all aggressors passed from Central Europe to Russia. Hitler wanted to transfer tanks to Poland, but he changed his mind. Compared to Poland, Romania was a very bad springboard for aggression. German troops would be harder to supply there than in Poland. In an attack from Romania, the road to the vital heartland of Russia would be longer and harder for an aggressor, who would have to overcome a multitude of barriers, including the lower reaches of the river Dnepr. Had Stalin been preparing himself for defense, and had he believed Churchill’s “warning,” he should have breathed a sigh of relief and relaxed his military preparations. In addition, Churchill explained why the German troops were staying in Romania instead of being transferred to Poland: the Germans had problems in Yugoslavia, particularly in Serbia. In other words, Churchill said that the German tank divisions were left in Romania not for aggression eastward against the Soviet Union, but on the contrary, from Romania they were pointed southwest toward Serbia, with their backs to Stalin.

Churchill’s letter had tremendous significance, but it absolutely couldn’t be regarded as a warning. It was more of an invitation to Stalin: the Germans wanted to transfer their divisions to Poland, but changed their minds; therefore, the Soviet Union had nothing to fear, especially since the German tank divisions in Romania had their backs turned to Stalin. Churchill wanted Stalin to evaluate these facts and act on them.⁴ Sir Basil Liddell Hart, the British military historian, made a brilliant analysis of the strategic situation of that time as seen from Hitler’s standpoint. According to General Jodl, to whom Liddell Hart referred, Hitler repeatedly told his generals that Britain’s only hope was a Soviet invasion of Europe.⁵ Churchill himself wrote on April 22, 1941, that “the Soviet government knows full well . . . that we stand in need of its help.”⁶ The only way Stalin could help Britain was by attacking Germany.

Hitler made one irremediable mistake, but not on July 21, 1940, when he ordered preparations for war against the Soviet Union. The mistake came on August 19, 1939, when he agreed to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Having agreed to the division of Poland, Hitler had to confront an unavoidable war against the West, having behind him the “neutral” Stalin. Precisely from this moment, Hitler had two fronts. The decision to begin Operation Barbarossa in the east without waiting for victory in the west was not a fatal error, but only an attempt to right the fatal error he had already made. But by then it was too late. Even the

capture of Moscow would not have solved Hitler's problem, because beyond Moscow still lay several million square kilometers of unending territory, vast centers of industrial power, and inexhaustible natural and human resources. It is always easy to begin a war with Russia, but not so easy to finish it. It was certainly easy for Hitler to fight in the European part of the Soviet Union: the territory was limited, there were many relatively good roads, and the winters were mild. Was Hitler ready to fight in Siberia, in that limitless expanse, where there were no roads and where the brutality of the cold was only matched by the brutality of Stalin's regime?

Stalin knew that war on two fronts spelled suicide for Hitler. He calculated that Hitler would not commit suicide by starting a war in the east without first finishing the war in the west. Stalin was patiently waiting for the German tank corps to land in Britain. Meanwhile, he did everything possible to convince Hitler of his desire for peace. That was why Soviet anti-aircraft guns were not firing on German aircraft crossing the Soviet borders, and Soviet newspapers and TASS proclaimed that there would be no war between the Soviet Union and Germany. If Stalin had succeeded in convincing Hitler that the Soviet Union was neutral, then the bulk of German forces would have been engaged in fierce battles trying to land on the British Isles and leaving practically all Europe defenseless and ripe to be "liberated" by the Red Army. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Yugoslavia, France, Greece, and Albania no longer had armies, governments, parliaments, or political parties. Millions of people had been driven into Nazi concentration camps and the whole of Europe was awaiting its liberation.

Stalin had helped Hitler come to power and transformed him, in Stalin's words, into a real "Icebreaker" that would trigger the world revolution in Europe. Stalin pushed along that Icebreaker of the revolution. Stalin demanded from the French and from other Communists that they let the Icebreaker crush Europe. Stalin supplied the Icebreaker with everything needed for a victorious advance. Stalin closed his eyes to all the crimes committed by the Nazis. But Hitler guessed Stalin's design. That was why World War II ended catastrophically for Stalin: he only got half of Europe.

A Blitzkrieg against Russia?

The first endless columns of Russian prisoners began to file into Germany. From that moment, the flow did not stop. Endless transports of Russian prisoners moved through roads and railroads all the time. But it was of little use. In the place of each vanquished army, the Russians raised another one. The endless lands of the tsars seemed to have unending human resources. How much longer could Germany stand against such competition? Will there not be a day, when Germany, regardless of the fact that it just achieved yet another victory, will be left without new troops, while the Russian command will again and again move new armies to the front? What will happen then?

—ADOLF HITLER, *MEIN KAMPF*

We are so accustomed to thinking of Hitler and his armies as remarkably superior that we accept without question that Stalin was afraid of Germany. However, why should Stalin have feared Hitler? Everyone, including Hitler himself and his generals, knew that Germany lacked the resources to fight a prolonged war. Hitler's only chance was a lightning war, a blitzkrieg. But a blitzkrieg against the Soviet Union was impossible, because it stretched more than ten thousand kilometers from west to east. If Hitler could seize even one thousand kilometers per month, which was impossible, even then he would have to count on a year of war. In addition, a regular European army could carry out a successful offensive on Soviet territory only four out of the twelve months of the year, from May 15 to September 15 (if there was no rain). Even if it was possible to take over the entire country during these four months, then what would an aggressor do with this territory when fall and winter came? It was easy to enter Russia, but hard to exit. Also, in June 1941 the peacetime Red Army counted 5.5 million soldiers and commanders. If every month Hitler killed and imprisoned one million Soviet soldiers, even then the war would last at least half a year, and the last phase would occur in December. He would have to overcome frost, snow, and blizzards. He would have to prepare for winter.

The challenges for the Germans wouldn't end there. Even in the supercritical conditions of the summer of 1941, the Soviet system of mobilization worked perfectly, and an additional 5.3 million people joined the ranks of the Red Army within one week of the war, before July 1, 1941.¹ After one week of the war, the Red Army consisted of over 10 million people. Even if Hitler continued to destroy a million per month, the war would still last a year. But the Soviet mobilization continued in July, August, September . . . "Our forces are innumerable," Stalin once said. The mobilization resources of the Soviet Union were almost 20 percent of the population, meaning 34.5 million people. This resource was fully used during the war. It was even surpassed. How long would it take to destroy such an army?

Germany was not ready for a war against Russia, and Stalin knew it. In 1940, British aviation already regularly bombed German cities, ports, railroad stations, and factories. Hitler couldn't secure even Berlin's safety from the British bombers. Did he have nothing better to do in these conditions than go conquer new lands in the east? Was Hitler ready to fight on two fronts?

We find some answers in the diary of the Chief of General Staff of Germany's land army, Colonel General F. Halder.

October 7, 1940: "An air war on two fronts is impossible."

November 26, 1940: "Horse-drawn carriages for anti-tank weapons. We have no limbers. . . . We have no capacity to supply our troops in Bulgaria with mountain equipment. . . . We have not a single snow-cleaning machine. . . . It is impossible to maintain a strict control over the large cities of France. . . . The empire's railroads in the future will be unable to work under such strain as today."

November 27, 1940: "Operations to take over the endless Russian spaces will not be successful."

December 3, 1940: "The fuel situation is bad. The tire situation is very bad."

December 4, 1940: "Too little artillery."

December 13, 1940: "Capturing Moscow does not have much significance (in Hitler's opinion). . . . The air forces are facing a war on two fronts."

December 23, 1940: "The situation with rubber is difficult."

January 16, 1941: "Anti-aircraft gun battalions of the land army, forty battalions. The special personnel for them have yet to be prepared. This is feasible only by autumn."

January 28, 1941: "The fuel situation is serious. We can count on fuel supply during the period of concentration and deployment, and two months of operations. . . . Automobile tires. The situation is very serious."²

Even though the German command knew that "an air war on two fronts was impossible," they still decided to start a two-front air war. Not only Halder but Hitler himself understood that taking Moscow did not mean the end of the war. And yet, Hitler's entire plan boiled down to taking Moscow in the belief that the rest of Russia would crumble. Hitler's generals planned to destroy Russia in three months, but they had only enough fuel for two.

"Operation Barbarossa. The goal of the campaign is unclear. It does not at all affect England. Our economic base does not improve from this. If we are tied down in Russia, the situation will become even more difficult. . . . Operation Barbarossa is extremely risky," Halder wrote.³ Stalin had iron logic, and when he was warned of a possible German invasion,

he asked: “But what for?” Hitler’s chief of staff, who planned the war, was wondering exactly the same.

A blitzkrieg is a tank war. On September 1, 1939, Germany only had 2,977 tanks.⁴ How did it happen that out of this number almost half (1,445 Pz-I tanks) had no cannon? How come the other half (1,223 Pz-II tanks) had only pathetic 20-mm cannons? How come they only had 98 Pz-III tanks with their useless 37-mm cannon, and only 211 Pz-IVs, which had 75-mm short-barreled cannon, not designed and not useful for war against other tanks?

By June 1941, Hitler had in his invading army 3,332 tanks,⁵ all of them light and all of them obsolete—not one single heavy tank. There were medium ones, which were simply light tanks covered with an extra layer of armor plates. Their defenses increased from this, but their mobility decreased: their speed, maneuverability, and ability to pass through rough terrain—all of which were necessary for maneuvers in large open spaces. Hitler didn’t have a single amphibious tank, or one with anti-projectile armor, nor one with powerful cannon. Stalin, on the other hand, had 23,925 tanks, including the best models in the world that had the best tank-building innovations of the time: powerful long-barrel cannons, wide caterpillar tracks, anti-tank defenses, diesel motors, and so on. Moreover, Stalin possessed almost endless means for producing these tanks. Stalin had more amphibious tanks than Hitler had tanks in total.

In addition to tanks, an army needed powerful tank formations. In Germany, tank divisions were created. But these divisions, to put it mildly, were inferior. In 1939, Hitler had six tank divisions. Germany entered World War II with six tank divisions! What sort of blitzkrieg could one dream about having only six tank divisions?! And even today some continue to claim that German generals understood the nature of blitzkrieg! In 1940, the number of tank divisions rose to ten, and in 1941 to twenty-one. The increase in the number of tank divisions was attained not by producing tanks, but by reassignment. In practice, the same number of tanks was divided first into six divisions, then ten, then twenty-one.

Liddell Hart commented:

This doubling in number of armored forces turned out to be sheer illusion, since it was achieved mostly at the expense of reducing the number of tanks in each division. . . . Some of the qualified expert tankers attempted to argue against such a decision, since the result of such measures was to multiply the number of staffs and secondary units in the so-called “tank divisions.” . . . Out of 17,000 people in the division, only 2,600 were tankers. But Hitler was stubborn. Seeing before him the vast Russian territory, he wanted to feel that he had more divisions, capable of delivering blows deep into the land, and counted on technological advantage over the Russians to serve as sufficient compensation for the “dilution” of his tank troops. . . . However, cutting the number of tanks in the divisions increased the main disadvantage of the German tank division—the fact that its units and subdivisions mostly consisted of infantry, and could not move on difficult terrain.⁶

Liddell Hart put the term German “tank division” in quotation marks. He explains his point of view: “Tanks could continue an offensive, but they, just like all other track vehicles, made up only a small part of each so-called “tank division.”⁷

Tanks alone do not ensure strength. A lone tank that ventures far ahead is vulnerable. A tank must be supported by infantry. “In 1941, the German army still consisted mostly

of plain infantry divisions, which moved on foot, and used animal transport,” said German General Guenther Blumentritt.⁸ On June 22, Hitler had on the eastern front 750,000 horses.⁹ A convoy of 220 horses with carts followed each German tank. Was it on carts that they planned to carry out the blitzkrieg? Out of 153 divisions launched by Hitler against the Soviet Union, only seventeen were tank divisions.¹⁰ There was not a single tank in the thirteen German motorized divisions at the beginning of World War II, while each Soviet rifle division had its own tank battalion of T-26 tanks. We have been taught to laugh at this tank. But the German infantry did not have tanks at all!

The entire German tank force was divided between the four tank groups. The rest of the German army fighting against the Soviet Union didn't have a single tank. It consisted entirely of infantry and 750,000 horses with carts. Colonel General Lotar Rendulic described his 20th Mountain Army: “With the exception of rear transport units, the army consisted entirely of infantry troops—200,000 soldiers and 70,000 horses.”¹¹ The German magazine *Der Spiegel* once published a giant photograph of laughing German soldiers.¹² That one photograph told more truth about the war than the whole article, and many articles like it, and even libraries of books. The photograph showed German soldiers walking on Soviet land in 1941 during the blitzkrieg. All are on foot. They do not have a single submachine gun. Their weapons consist of rifles with bayonets, the 1898 model, and two machine guns. In the background, there are hundreds of carts.

The German army relied heavily on cars and motorized transportation. The plethora of such machinery—more than 500,000 cars in the invading army—played a cruel trick on the Germans. While on the European front, which was heavily road-linked, such an abundance of motorized transportation was more than sufficient, but the German cars on the Russian front (along its so-called roads) often turned into a setback. First, the Germans needed specialized, road-tolerant cars, wheel-track and track-based transport vehicles and tractors. Second, the chronic lack of fuel led to frequent halts in the general mass of automobiles.

Field artillery was the main tool of the Red Army for breaking through enemy defense lines. First were the howitzers. A howitzer, compared to cannon of the same weight, had a slower initial shell speed and a smaller range. But its shells were more powerful and its fire trajectory was curved, which was useful for firing upon an enemy dug into the ground. Marshal Kulik commanded the Red Army artillery for many years. During his leadership, the best artillery systems in the world were created, primarily the howitzers. By June 22, 1941, the Red Army had 15,464 howitzers of all types.¹³ The most powerful ammunition factories were created for supplying them. The German army had 10,810 howitzers by June 1, 1941.¹⁴ However, those howitzers had to be divided among several fronts, including the African one. Furthermore, Germany had too few non-ferrous metals to manufacture artillery shells in such quantities as were being produced in the Soviet Union. Finally, the German howitzers were obsolete, developed during World War I or even before it.

Stalin had long-range bombing aviation, which Hitler did not have. In 1940 and 1941, Germany was already being bombed by British strategic aviation. Stalin was ready to add his forces to this effort. Hitler, meanwhile, planned to “bomb Britain out of the war,” but that plan failed, because he had no strategic aviation at his disposal. Later on, Hitler decided to take over the European part of the USSR up to the Arkhangelsk-Astrakhan line, and everything east of that line he was going to leave to the bombers. The problem with this plan was that Hitler had almost no long-range bombers.

When he received reports that the German army was preparing to invade, Stalin simply did not believe them. Molotov said before the invasion: “One must be an idiot to attack us.” According to Stalin’s calculations, an attack on the USSR would have meant suicide for Hitler and his empire. This calculation was entirely confirmed by the results of the war. The question is not whether Stalin was afraid of Hitler or not. Stalin had no reason to be afraid. Stalin considered Hitler and his generals to be reasonable people, and reasonable people would not embark on such an adventure, with Britain on their back. Reasonable people could not plan to crush the Ural and Siberian industrial complexes using long-range bombers, especially when they had no such bombers. Here we must ask a different question: why did Hitler attack the USSR?

Hitler signed Open Directive No. 21 ordering Operation Barbarossa—the attack on the Soviet Union—on December 18, 1940: “The end goal of the operation is the creation of a protective barrier against Asian Russia along the line Volga-Astrakhansk. In this manner, in case of need the last industrial region the Russians have left in the Urals could be paralyzed using aviation.” Since Germany invaded the USSR on June 22, it was impossible to reach the Volga line before the autumn rains. German tanks had a short motor operating time, and therefore on the way to Moscow the entire German army inevitably had to stop for two to three weeks for the overall repairs of tanks (replacement of engines, transmissions, pistons, and so forth). If Moscow had been taken in August, they would have had to continue toward the Volga line, and for this another stop would have been needed for the overall repair of tanks and the recovery of the troops’ fighting capacity. It would have been impossible to reach the Volga even by September. In October, there would be rain and mud. Even if they could have successfully reached the Volga line in September, it was impossible to bomb the Urals from this position: there were few air bases on the right bank of the Volga. First, they would have to be built, which was hard to do: in October, the area was a bare wet steppe, in November, a bare frozen steppe.

If Hitler had been able to build air bases on the right bank of the Volga River, he still would not have been able to bomb the industry centers of the Urals. The German Do-17, Ju-88, and He-111 bombers were created for completely different tasks. Their missions had been the destruction of small-scale, mostly mobile targets in the area of battle and in the enemy’s near rear. These bombers were created for short-range flights, had a small bomb-carrying capacity, and could act only at low and medium altitudes. To reach the Urals and return, the bombers Hitler had in 1941 had to take with them plenty of fuel and no bombs at all. If Hitler’s bombers had a sufficient radius of action, even then they could not have bombed the Urals. Germany was running out of fuel. In August 1941, it already had so little fuel that it had to halt large-scale operations.

If there had been enough fuel in October, November, and later on it could not have been delivered to the Volga-area airbases, which were not yet built anyway. Delivery of even one hundred tons of fuel, where there were no roads, across a distance of one thousand kilometers, demanded huge expenditure of fuel and of lubricant materials. Fuel transport had to run on something too. The tractors had to cross the steppes. Even if fuel had been supplied to the non-existing airbases, bombs had to be supplied as well. Thousands of tons of bombs were not enough for such an operation. But the delivery of even 100,000 tons of bombs to the non-existent air bases on the Volga would have required a tremendous amount of fuel.

In December 1940, when Hitler signed the directive for the attack on the Soviet Union, it was perfectly clear that the light single- and dual-engine bombers had too small a radius and too pathetic a bomb load, and were not fit for destroying industrial targets. At the same time, German bombers were flying from the excellent air bases in northern France, across the Channel, and bombing the industrial and military targets of London, Bristol, Coventry, Plymouth, and Southampton. Supplying fuel and ammunition from Germany to the airports of northern France was no problem. The targets were nearby, just across the Channel, and the planes could take less fuel and more bombs. Nonetheless, even in these most favorable circumstances, in nine months of intense bombing raids, from August 12, 1940, to May 12, 1941, all of Germany's aviation was still unable to "bomb British industry out of the war." If the entire German aviation could not in nine months destroy the industry of nearby Britain, how many months did Hitler plan to spend trying to destroy the industry centers of the remote Urals?

To destroy industrial regions situated in the deep rear of the enemy, an aggressor needs long-range bombers with a radius of action of several thousand kilometers and a bomb-carrying capacity of over five tons. The long-range bomber must also be a high-altitude bomber, otherwise it would be vulnerable to the enemy's anti-aircraft artillery. Also, is necessary a minimum of one thousand such bombers. Hitler had none. Even if Hitler had had long-range bombers, it would still have been impossible to use them. A four-engine bomber, carrying five tons of bombs at a multi-kilometer altitude for several thousands of kilometers, was extremely fuel-thirsty. Where would the fuel come from, if there was not enough even for fighters and light bombers?

Intelligence Reports and Stalin's Reaction

Stalin had three separate independent espionage services: the First Directorate of the NKGB; the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff (in 1942 it became Chief Directorate); and Stalin's personal intelligence service, concealed under the name "Special Section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party."

The total power of these agencies was colossal. Sufficient information is available about the penetration into leading German military and political organs by Stalin's espionage services. A group under the code name "Viking" worked in the staff of the OKW (Supreme Command of the Armed Forces); seven high-ranking German officers and generals supplied information straight from Hitler's cabinet to Stalin's agents. In Germany, the Soviet military intelligence managed to gain access to the most secret information from the highest levels of power.¹

Several networks of agents simultaneously worked for Stalin, completely independent of each other. The lies of one were immediately exposed by information provided by the others. A group under the code name "Alta" worked in the German embassy in Moscow. Its members included Gerhard Kegel and Else Stoebe. The entire embassy was wrapped up in the web of Stalin's espionage. This group of agents "was supplemented by a man who had, in essence, unrestricted access to all [the] state secrets of Germany."² The German embassy in Moscow had ties to Goering's staff, to the science and technology organs of the Third Reich, and of course to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Among these agents, there was even one of the closest associates of the foreign affairs minister, Ribbentrop. He was recruited in Poland to work for the British and in his convictions he was an adamant enemy of the Soviet Union."³ This agent, like many others, thought he was working against Stalin, when in reality he was working for him.

We must remember the friend of Goering's wife, the first-rate Nazi movie star Olga Tschechowa. This woman dazzled Berlin with her blinding beauty and her cruelty, which was inexplicable, unusual, and unseen even for that time. In 1936, on Hitler's orders, Olga Tschechowa was awarded the title People's Actress of Germany. She was often seen next to

Hitler at receptions. Then, in 1945, the popular Third Reich actress was befriended by Stalin and given the highest Soviet marks of distinction.

Stalin's espionage stretched far beyond the borders of the great powers. The Bulgarian Tsar Boris had an advisor, General Konstantin Lukash. Before each meeting with the tsar, the general prepared to answer any question the tsar could ask him. During the course of the preparations, Luben Lukash, the general's brother, played the role of the tsar, and asked the tsar's advisor the trickiest questions. The general had to answer quickly and precisely. As a result, the younger brother was just as informed as the tsar. He worked for the GRU, and asked his brother—the tsar's advisor—questions that interested Stalin.⁴

After World War I, Czechoslovakia was among the ten wealthiest and most developed nations in the world. The Skoda factories produced weapons of the highest world standards, primarily artillery. The daughter of the factory director, Blanca Karlikova, managed to sneak out blueprints of the 210-mm cannon and transfer them to the right person. She worked for the same group of agents that was working against the Bulgarian tsar.⁵

Testimonies about the might of Stalin's espionage abound. For example, Air Force Major General P. M. Stefanovsky recounted, as if it were something utterly insignificant, that in July 1941 he was summoned by Stalin and told: "In three days, the Germans will bomb Moscow."⁶ Stefanovsky described the measures that were taken, and in three days the first massive air raid on Moscow was deflected. But we can pause on this seemingly insignificant episode. How could Stalin have known that in precisely three days the Germans would bomb Moscow? The pilots at the air bases did not know what they would be doing the following day. It was always a secret. The success of the upcoming operation, the lives and safety of the pilots, depended on that secret. A very small group of people knew the plans for air war. Commanders of formations and pilots found out the targets they had to bomb only at the last moment. Yet Stalin knew not only what the German pilots would be doing the following day, but also what they would be doing in three days.

Anastas Mikoyan, member of the Politburo, also recounted an instance that demonstrated the extraordinary capabilities of Stalin's intelligence services. On March 27, 1943, at around two o'clock in the morning, Mikoyan was summoned to Stalin's dacha in Volynskoe. Stalin told him what the German command was planning for the summer of 1943.⁷ The Battle of Stalingrad had just ended. The Red Army made a thrust forward, but was stopped in the regions around Kharkov, Orel, and Belgorod. A balance of powers set in. Neither one of the sides could advance. Both sides switched to defense, and began intensive preparations for the summer battle that would unfold in these regions in another four months. The Battle of Kursk would be one of the bloodiest battles in human history. It began on July 5, 1943. But German generals began roughly planning the operation on March 13, 1943; on March 27, Stalin announced this fact to Mikoyan and ordered the secret preparation of the strategic reserve of the Steppe military district, consisting of eight armies, including one air and one tank guards army, for a defensive battle and for the following offensive operations. The Steppe military district was deployed behind the main alignment of Soviet troops, and at the critical moment of the battle it was transformed into the Steppe front.

Stalin was constantly peeking at Hitler's cards. During the development of German operations in the Kursk region, all details and all changes in the plan were immediately reported to Stalin. Before the beginning of the operation, German generals, who were the immediate

executors of the plans, received the appropriate directives and the final draft of the operation. Stalin had received this draft six days earlier.

Oddly enough, in 1941 Soviet spies reported to Stalin that Hitler was planning to attack, but Stalin did not believe them. Richard Sorge (agency covername—Ramzai) was a spy whom Stalin ordered to return to the USSR “for vacation” on July 29, 1938. He refused to return. In January 1940, he wrote to his Moscow contact: “I am grateful for your greetings and [good] wishes [for] my vacation. However, if I go on vacation, it will immediately reduce the information.” In May, he refused for the second time: “It goes without saying that we are postponing the date of our return home because of the present military situation. May we assure you once again that this is not the time to raise this question?” In October, he asked: “May I count on coming home after the end of the war?” It is a strange question. Every secret agent knows that after the war he will be allowed to return home. Moreover, they propose right now that he arrive for vacation. But Sorge refuses. What is going on?

A multitude of books and articles have been written about Sorge in the Soviet Union. Some of them overflow with praise: he was such a great intelligence officer, such a true Communist that he even spent his own money, earned in his difficult work as a journalist, on his illegal work. One of the Soviet weekly magazines⁸ published a report that Sorge had very important documents, but was unable to send them to the center, because the center had not sent a courier.

Meanwhile, Yan Berzin, the brilliant chief of Soviet military intelligence who had recruited Sorge, was executed after being horrendously tortured. Solomon Uritsky, another GRU chief who had personally given Sorge his instructions, was also executed. Lev Borovich (agency covername—Rozenal), deputy head of the 2nd department of the intelligence headquarters, direct supervisor to Sorge, was shot. Gorev, the Soviet illegal resident who had fixed Sorge’s passage from Germany, was in jail.⁹ Aino Kuusinen, Sorge’s secret collaborator who was the wife of the “president of the Finnish Democratic Republic” and of a future member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU, was also in jail. Ekaterina Maksimova, Sorge’s wife, had been arrested, admitted to having links with enemies, and died in confinement in 1943. Karl Ramm, the illegal GRU resident in Shanghai and former deputy of Sorge, was summoned back to Moscow “for a vacation” and executed. Sorge received the order to come back for a vacation and refused to travel to the Soviet Union. Undoubtedly, Sorge guessed what was awaiting him in Moscow.

These discrepancies are explained easily: Sorge became a defector. At that time, a more precise term was invented—a malevolent defector. That was why he was paying agents out of his own pocket—the center stopped funding him! Not wishing to return to a hasty trial and certain death, Sorge continued to work for the Communists, but now no longer in the role of a secret agent, but rather as an amateur informer, not for money but for his own satisfaction. Sorge calculated that after the war his superiors would understand that he only told them the truth, and they would pardon him and appreciate his work. The center did not lose contact with him until the end. It accepted his telegrams, but apparently only to urge him: “come home, come home, come home,” to which Ramzai replied “too busy, too busy, too busy.”

Stalin did not trust Richard Sorge, because he was a defector with a capital sentence hanging over his head. Someone had invented the legend that Richard Sorge supposedly submitted highly important information about the German invasion to the GRU, but

nobody believed him. Sorge was a very able intelligence officer, but he told Moscow nothing of significance about the German invasion. What was more, he fell victim to disinformation and fed the GRU false reports. On April 11, 1941, he sent Moscow a telegram: "The representative of the [German] General Staff in Tokyo has stated that war against the Soviet Union will begin immediately after the war in Europe ends."

Hitler prepared the invasion, spreading lies that looked very much like the truth. Hitler knew that it had already become impossible to conceal his preparations to invade the Soviet Union. Therefore, he said in secret, in a way that Stalin could hear, "Yes, I want to attack Stalin . . . after I have finished the war in the west." If Sorge's telegram from April 11 (and other similar telegrams) were to be believed, there was no need to worry: the war against Great Britain was going on with no end in sight.

The GRU did not need Sorge. Based on extensive studies of all the economic, political, and military aspects of the situation, the GRU concluded that Germany could not win a war on two fronts; Hitler would not begin a war in the east without first finishing the war in the west.¹⁰ The first conclusion proved correct; the second did not.

Even before Sorge's "warning," the new head of the GRU Lieutenant General F. I. Golikov submitted a detailed report to Stalin on March 20, 1941, which concluded that "the earliest possible date on which operations against the USSR may begin is the moment following victory over England or after an honorable peace for Germany has been achieved." But Stalin knew this simple truth without Golikov having to tell him. Stalin replied to Churchill's letter from June 25, 1940, that Hitler might begin a war against the Soviet Union in 1941 if Britain had ceased to resist by that time.

But Hitler, whom Stalin had driven into a strategic impasse by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, suddenly realized that he had nothing to lose and that inevitably Germany had two fronts: if he did not attack Stalin, Stalin would stab him in the back. Therefore, Hitler attacked first. Neither Golikov nor Stalin anticipated this. It was a suicidal decision, but Hitler had no choice. Stalin simply could not understand that having found himself in a strategic impasse, Hitler would take such a suicidal step. General Golikov, head of the GRU, had not contemplated that either. Sorge (and several others) simply confirmed this view with the false information in their telegrams.

Some argue that later, on June 15, 1941, Sorge correctly named the date of the German invasion as June 22. But was Richard Sorge to be believed? First, he had said that Hitler would not fight against Stalin without finishing the war against Great Britain, and then, soon after, reported a date for the invasion, June 22, thereby saying that Hitler would invade the Soviet Union after all without ending the war against Britain. Sorge's reports canceled each other out.

Intelligence is the most thankless work in the world. Those who fail and get hanged—like Sorge, for example—become famous. Stalin also had military intelligence officers whose achievements were truly outstanding, but precisely because they were so successful, they remain unknown to us. One Soviet intelligence officer had access to some of Hitler's real secrets. According to Marshal of the Soviet Union A. A. Grechko, "eleven days after Hitler approved the final plan for the war against the Soviet Union (December 18, 1940), this fact and the basic details of the decision taken by the German High Command became known to our intelligence organs."¹¹

In December 1940, Lieutenant General F. I. Golikov, chief of the GRU, reported to Stalin that, according to confirmed reports, Hitler had decided to attack the Soviet Union without waiting for the war in the west to end. This highly important document was discussed in early January in a very close circle in the Soviet High Command in Stalin's presence. Stalin did not believe the document, and said that any document could be forged. Stalin demanded of Golikov that he organize Soviet military intelligence so that it would know at any moment whether Hitler was really preparing for war or just bluffing. Golikov reported that he had already done this. The GRU was attentively following a whole range of aspects of German military preparations, and from these the GRU would accurately identify the moment when preparations for invasion would begin. Stalin asked Golikov to explain how he would know this. Golikov answered that he could only tell Stalin personally and not anyone else.

Subsequently, Golikov regularly reported to Stalin personally, and each time he told him that the preparations for invasion had not yet begun. Golikov knew about the massive concentration of German troops on Soviet borders, about the huge ammunition supplies, about the movements of the German air force, about German defectors, and about many other things. He was informed about the numbers of nearly all German divisions, the names of their commanders, and their locations. He knew many important secrets, including the name of Operation Barbarossa and the time of its inception. Even on the eve of the invasion, however, Golikov reported that preparations for invasion had not yet begun, and without these preparations it was not possible for Germany to begin the war.

When the war broke out, Stalin sent Golikov on a trip to Britain and the United States and briefed him personally. Golikov was then put in command of armies and fronts. In 1943, Stalin appointed him to the crucial post of Deputy People's Commissar for Defense, which was deputy to Stalin himself, to deal with cadre matters. Stalin allowed only his most trusted men to handle the delicate task of selecting and placing cadres. Golikov continued to rise in rank after Stalin's death, and eventually became a Marshal of the Soviet Union.

Golikov's impunity for obviously wrong intelligence had been worrying me personally for a long time, until I attended a lecture in the Academy of the GRU. Later, when I was working in the central apparatus of the GRU, I found confirmation to this answer.

Golikov used to report to Stalin that Hitler was not preparing for war against the Soviet Union. It turned out that Golikov was reporting the truth to Stalin, since Hitler was not making such preparations. Golikov knew that Stalin did not trust documents. Golikov did not trust them either. He therefore looked for other indicators which would unerringly signal the moment when Hitler began his preparations for war with the Soviet Union.

All GRU agents in Europe were ordered to infiltrate organizations directly or indirectly connected with sheep farming. Over a few months, intelligence was gathered and carefully processed on the number of sheep in Europe, on the main sheep-breeding centers and slaughterhouses. Golikov was informed twice a day about mutton prices in Europe. In addition, Soviet intelligence began to hunt for dirty cloths and oil-stained pieces of paper left behind by soldiers cleaning their weapons. There were many German troops in Europe. The troops were stationed in field conditions. Each soldier cleaned his weapon at least once a day. Cloths and paper which have been used for weapon cleaning were usually either burned or buried, but of course this rule was not always obeyed. The GRU had ample opportunity to collect an enormous quantity of dirty cloths. A large number of these dirty cloths were sent across the

frontier wrapped around various iron implements, so as not to arouse suspicion. Larger-than-usual quantities of kerosene lamps, primus stoves, and lighters were sent across the border, by both legal and illegal means.

Every piece of information was analyzed by hundreds of Soviet experts, and the results reported immediately to Golikov. He immediately informed Stalin that Hitler had not yet begun preparations to invade the Soviet Union, so there was no need to pay attention to every buildup of German troops or German General Staff documents.

Golikov believed, with good reason, that a country needed serious preparation to fight the Soviet Union. One of the vital things Germany would need, if it were to be ready to fight such a war, was sheepskin coats—no fewer than six million of them. As soon as Hitler decided to attack the Soviet Union, his General Staff would have to order industry to begin producing millions of sheepskin coats. This would be reflected immediately on the European markets. In spite of the war, mutton prices would fall because of the simultaneous slaughter of millions of animals, while sheepskin prices would rise sharply.

Golikov also calculated that the German army would have to use a new type of lubricating oil for its weaponry. The usual oil used by Germany would congeal in the frost, component parts would freeze together, and the weapons would not work. Golikov waited for the German army to change the type of oil it used in weapon-cleaning. The Soviet experts' examination of dirty cloths showed that the German army was still using its usual oil, and there were no signs of a change to a new type.

Soviet experts also watched motor fuel. In heavy frost, the normal German fuel broke down into incombustible components. Golikov knew that if Hitler decided to open a second front, he would have to order the mass production of a fuel which would not disintegrate in heavy frost. Soviet intelligence was sending samples of German liquid fuel across the border in lighters and lamps. There were many other indicators, which the GRU followed closely for warning signals.

But Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa without making any preparations. Stalin, therefore, had no reason to punish Golikov. Golikov had done all that was humanly possible to discover German preparations for war. He told Stalin that no preparations were taking place, and this was the truth. There had only been a great buildup of German troops. Golikov gave instructions that not all German divisions had to be targets of attention, but only those that were ready to invade; those were divisions that had 15,000 sheepskin coats in their depots. There were simply no such divisions ready for war in the entire *Wehrmacht*.

The GRU chiefs knew where, what quantities, and what kinds of liquid fuel and lubricating oils were produced in Germany and the occupied territories. The quantities of liquid fuel possessed by Hitler were not at all sufficient to conduct deep offensive operations. But the most attention was paid to the type of fuel they produced. Analysis showed that Germany was not conducting intensive research in the field of creating frost-resistant fuels and oils; German industry was not producing them in any significant quantity; the rear units of the *Wehrmacht Heer* and the *Luftwaffe* were not storing such fuel and oil for a grand-scale war.

The temperature at which pure benzene crystallizes is 5.4 Celsius. In Germany, fuel was obtained by the hydrogenation of low-quality coal. Into this fuel, large quantities of benzol had to be added to raise the levels of octane. Benzol has high anti-detonation qualities. However, it drastically reduces low-temperature qualities. The temperature of crystallization for the main kinds of German fuels ranged between -9.6 and -14.5 Celsius. Only a madman

could begin a war with such fuel against a country where in the winter a temperature of –20 Celsius was the norm. Soviet intelligence did not consider the German generals to be madmen, and it concluded that Germany was not preparing for war.

Hitler's soldiers also needed boots, warm underwear, sweaters, special tents, hats, heaters, skis, ski wax, masking robes, oil and lubricants that would not freeze, devices for heating water, frost-resistant car batteries, and winter fuel for tanks, cars, and airplanes. They needed tanks with broad caterpillar tracks, thousands of cars that could drive in poor road conditions, and so on. They had none of these. Their lack of preparedness was total, shameful, and scandalous. The argument was that Hitler did not need coats, because he planned to end the war in three months. However, he still needed to prepare for winter. . . . Hitler's Colonel General H. Hoth, commander of the 3rd Tank Group, wrote: "The objective of destroying the centers of the war industry located farther east was delegated to the air force. These were utopian plans. The radius of action of German bombers then was one thousand kilometers. Even if it had been possible to reach the projected Volga-Arkhangelsk line (which was planned for one campaign, i.e., three to four months), the radius of [the] bombers was not sufficient to disrupt the functioning of industry in the Ural and the Sverdlovsk regions. And even Sverdlovsk is not the end of the world."¹²

Colonel General H. Guderian, commander of the 2nd Tank Group, recounted: "When they unfolded a map of Russia before me, I could not believe my eyes. Everything that I considered impossible I was supposed to make into reality?"¹³ Guderian knew that Germany couldn't defeat the Soviet Union. Defeat was impossible not only in three months, but in general.

"Just look at these vast territories," said General Field Marshal Karl von Rundstedt, Commander of Army Group South. "We cannot crush the enemy and occupy all of western Russia from the Baltic to the Black Sea in just a few months."¹⁴

Stalin and Golikov reasoned in a similar manner. They all expected Hitler and his field marshals to behave reasonably—in other words, to prepare for a prolonged war, including a war in winter. But reasonable actions were not being taken.

The War Has Begun

Only now did we realize how well the Russians had been prepared for war.

—ADOLF HITLER, RADIO ADDRESS, OCTOBER 3, 1941

During April, May, and the first half of June 1941, German reconnaissance planes flew “by mistake” over the western regions of the Soviet Union. Stalin ordered not to shoot them down. At the same time, Soviet planes, also “by mistake,” flew over territory occupied by German troops.

Both regular pilots and commanders were flying “by mistake” over German territory. Commander of the 43rd Air Force Fighter Division of the Western special military district, Major General G. N. Zakharov, remembered flying in the sky and looking at German troops: “An impression formed that some sort of movement was originating deep within the territories, which was halted only at the edges of the border, and was held by it, as if by an invisible barrier, ready to flow over the edge at any moment.”¹ The German pilots flying then over Soviet territory viewed the same picture.

The predicament of General M. F. Lukin demonstrates the full tragedy of the situation. As an army commander, he had already fought in Ukraine in the vicinity of Shepetovka, while the staff of his army still remained in the Trans-Baikal. The trains carrying his army stretched across thousands of kilometers. The worst situation was when a train had to stop in the middle of the fields instead of at a station. A tank battalion is a formidable force, but in a train it is completely defenseless. If the war found a train carrying heavy armor in a place where there were no facilities for unloading, the train either had to be destroyed or abandoned. Those divisions that didn’t advance to the border in trains weren’t in a better position. A division marching in columns was a great target for air force raids. The entire Red Army presented one great target.

In his memoirs, the German pilot Hans-Ulrich Rudel described the beginning of the war against the Soviet Union. He flew a Ju-87 and completed 2,430 battle missions.

By the evening of the first day I had completed four trips beyond the frontline to the area between Grodno and Vokovysk. We saw huge masses of tanks and trucks here. We mostly saw KV-1, KV-2, and T-34 tanks. We bombed tanks and anti-aircraft guns. . . . The next day, we first flew out at 3 AM, and finally returned at 10 PM. One had to forget about normal rest during the night, so we made use of every available minute to fall down on the grass by our airplanes and to sleep. . . . Even on my first mission, I noticed innumerable fortifications built along the borderlines. They stretched for many hundreds of kilometers deep into Russian territory—and yet, they were partly unfinished. We flew over unfinished airbases: in some places, the concrete landing strips were just being constructed. Even at such airbases, however, one could find a few aircraft waiting. We saw, for example, along the road to Vitebsk, which our troops were advancing upon, one such almost-finished airbase with many “Martin” bombers. They either did not have enough fuel or enough crews. While flying over these numerous airbases and fortifications, we all had the same thought in our heads—how lucky we were to have struck first. It seemed that the Soviets were feverishly readying the groundwork for an attack against us. And which other Western country could Russia have attacked? If the Russians had completed their preparations, there would have been almost no hope of stopping them. . . . The highway [from] Smolensk [to] Moscow was the target of many raids; it was packed with huge amounts of Russian military equipment and supplies. Trucks and tanks were lined up one after another almost without any intervals, often in three parallel columns. If all this massive machinery had attacked us. . . . There were no difficulties in attacking so enticing a target. In a few days, the entire road was transformed into piles of rubble.²

In the German pilot’s description, there is one phrase about the construction of defense structures that might create some confusion. Perhaps the Red Army was preparing defenses? No, it was not. If it had been preparing for defense, the arriving troops would not have been kept in columns along the roads, they would have been sent immediately to the trenches. Rudel also mentioned the “Martin” bombers. Indeed, military supplies from the United States and Great Britain began to arrive in the Soviet Union long before June 22, 1941.

“Strategic defense was born out of necessity during combat, it was not planned ahead of time,” says official Soviet military-historical research.³ The defensive operations of the Red Army in the summer of 1941 were pure improvisation. Before the war, the Red Army neither prepared for defense nor conducted any training in defensive operations. Soviet field manuals don’t contain a word about defense on a strategic scale. Not only did the Red Army not have any defense plans, but even in a purely theoretical sense the issues involved in conducting defense operations were never worked out or discussed.

Moreover, the Soviet people and army were not ready for defense, even psychologically. “It is precisely the interests of defending the USSR that will demand the conduct of broad offensive operations on enemy territory, and this does not in any way contradict the character of defensive war,” wrote *Pravda* on August 19, 1939. From the first moments of the German invasion, the Red Army tried to go on the offensive, or carry out counterattacks and counteroffensives. But this was also improvisation. Counteroffensives were not worked out at any of the prewar training exercises; they were not even discussed in theory: “The question of counteroffensive . . . was not posed before the Great Patriotic War.”⁴

Before the war, the Soviet command prepared neither for defense nor for counterattacks. The Soviet Union planned a different kind of war. Marshal A. M. Vasilevsky reported that during the last year before the war the officers and generals of the General Staff and the staffs of the military districts and fleets worked fifteen to seventeen hours a day without holidays or vacations. Marshals Bagramian and Sokolovsky; Generals Shtemenko, Kurassov, and Malandin; and many others have confirmed that information. General Anissov and General Smorodinov reportedly worked twenty hours a day.

In February 1941, General G. K. Zhukov became the Chief of General Staff of the Red Army. From that time, the General Staff in essence began to operate on a wartime regime. Zhukov himself worked very hard, and did not allow anyone else to relax. The veterans of the General Staff remembered Zhukov's reign as the most frightening period in history, more frightening than the Great Purges. At that time, the General Staff and the other staffs were working with inhuman intensity. Then the Germans invaded. Every commander, starting with regiment level and higher, had in his safe a so-called "Red Packet," which contained the plans for war. The commanders opened their "Red Packets," but they did not find in them anything useful for defense. "Of course we had detailed plans and orders about what was to be done on day "M" . . . everything was written to the minute and in great detail. . . . All these plans existed. But, unfortunately, they did not say anything about what was to be done if the enemy suddenly went into attack."⁵

Something else is unclear. If the Red Army entered the war without any plans, then Stalin, upon finding out about this, should have shot the chief of general staff and all those who participated in developing the plans. This did not happen. On the contrary, those who participated in developing Soviet plans—Vassilevsky, Sokolovsky, Vatutin, Malandin, Bagramian, Shtemenko, and Kurassov—began the war as major generals or even lieutenant colonels, and ended it as marshals or at least with the four stars of army generals. During the war, they all proved to be truly great strategists. They were all devoted, even pedantic, staff officers, who could not imagine life without a plan. If Soviet staffs worked very hard and developed war plans before the war, but those were not defense or counteroffensive plans, what kinds of plans could they be?

The Soviet Black Sea fleet had the following military objective before the war: "active military actions against enemy ships and transports near the Bosphorus and on the passageways to the enemy's bases, as well as cooperation with land troops during their movement along the Black Sea coast."⁶ Admiral S. Gorshkov remembered that the Baltic and Northern fleets, as well as the Black Sea fleet, had purely defensive objectives, but they were to be achieved through aggressive methods. The actions of the Soviet fleet during the first minutes, hours, and days of the war showed with sufficient clarity that they had plans, but these were not plans for defense. On June 22, 1941, Soviet submarines from the Black Sea fleet immediately sailed into the sea toward the shores of Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey. On that same day, the submarines of the Baltic fleet sailed toward the shores of Germany with the objective of "sinking all enemy ships and vessels according to the rules of unrestricted submarine warfare."⁷ The order made no exceptions, not even for medical vessels sailing under the Red Cross flag.

Starting on June 22, the Black Sea naval air force conducted open military actions in the interests of the Danube military flotilla with the objectives of opening the way for it to advance upward along the river. On June 25 and 26, the Black Sea fleet's cruisers appeared in the vicinity of the Romanian port of Constanta and carried out an intensive artillery raid

with the goal of landing assault troops on the shores. At the same time, the Danube military flotilla began assault operations in the Danube river delta.

The garrison of the Soviet naval base Hanko, located on Finnish territory, did not switch to a defensive regime after the start of hostilities, but instead began intensive assault operations, taking over nineteen Finnish islands in the course of several days.⁸

On June 25, despite losses suffered by Soviet air forces during the first days of the war, airplanes of the Northern Front carried out a surprise bombing raid. The staff of the Northern Front reported on that morning: "The air force of the front and of the armies started on 6:20 AM to carry out, by bomber formations, the task of exterminating the enemy's air force on his airfields."⁹ The enemy's name is spelled out in the report which the staff issued later that same day: "Bombed were all known airfields of the southern part of Finland."¹⁰ The Germans, who happened to have invaded the USSR three days before, are not mentioned in the reports. This means that the USSR, without declaring war and in violation of the peace treaty it signed with Finland just a year earlier, committed an unprovoked act of aggression against its neighbor. Would somebody explain why this crime against peace was not a part of the Nurnberg indictments?

On June 23, the 1st Long-range Bomber Aviation Corps carried out a massive attack against military targets in Koenigsberg and Danzig. This was no improvisation. On the morning of June 22, at 6:44 AM, the Soviet long-range bomber air force received orders to act according to the plans.¹¹ For several days, it tried to carry out these orders. On June 26, 1941, the 4th Long-Range Bomber Aviation Corps began to bomb the Ploiești oil fields in Romania. After just a few days of raids, the amount of oil obtained in Romania was reduced almost in half. Even when the Soviet air force sustained unimaginable losses at its bases, it had managed to wreak huge damage on the Romanian oil industry. Under any other circumstances, the Soviet air force would have been much more dangerous and could have fully paralyzed the entire German military, industrial, and transportation capacities through its actions against the oil-producing regions. Hitler understood the threat all too well, and saw an invasion of the USSR as his only possible defense. Of course, even that did not save him.

On June 22, 1941, the 41st Rifle Division of the 6th Rifle Corps of the 6th Army, without waiting to hear orders from higher commanders, acted according to prewar plans and crossed the state border in the Rava-Russkaya region. The 102nd Rifle Regiment of this division crossed the border on a front line of eight kilometers and penetrated four to six kilometers into enemy territory. In the morning of June 22, 1941, the commander of the Northwestern Front, Colonel General F. I. Kuznetsov, without awaiting orders from Moscow, issued an order to his troops to attack Tilzit in Eastern Prussia. For the Northwestern Front's staff, for the commanders of the armies and their staffs, this decision was not at all surprising: an attack on Tilzit had been worked out in training exercises just days earlier and "was very familiar to the formations commanders and their staffs."¹² Colonel General Kuznetsov simply put the prewar plans into action. On the evening of that same day, the Soviet high command, not yet knowing about General Kuznetsov's actions, ordered him to do exactly what he had already begun doing: to attack Tilzit in Eastern Prussia.

The High Command also ordered the neighboring Western Front to carry out a powerful attack on the Polish city of Suvalki. This was no surprise to the Western Front commander General D. G. Pavlov. He knew the objectives of his front long before the directives from Moscow arrived, and had already issued the orders to advance on Suvalki. However, because

the German air force had not been destroyed in a surprise raid but, on the contrary, the entire Soviet Western Front had lost 738 planes during the first hours of the war, advancing was not at all the best option. The Western Front, its command, staff, the army commanders and the chiefs of their staffs knew long before the war that their primary objective was the encirclement of the German formations in the vicinity of Suwalki. A Soviet attack on Suwalki had been prepared long before the war. The objective had been identified by all Soviet commanders. Of course, the lower-ranking commanders had no right to know the tactical levels of these objectives, but in the higher staffs they were clearly formulated, sealed in secret envelopes and kept in safes in all headquarters, even those of the battalions. For example, the reconnaissance battalion of the 27th Rifle Division, concentrated along the border near the city of Augustow, was getting ready to deploy reconnaissance forces around Suwalki.¹³ Its objective was to secure a rapid advance of the entire 27th Rifle Division from Augustow on Suwalki.

Long before the war, huge masses of Soviet troops were gathered in the regions around Augustow. Here, on Soviet territory, the Augustow canal stretched parallel to and right along the border. If the plans had been made for defense, the troops should have been positioned behind the canal, so they could use it as an obstacle, an anti-tank trench. But the Soviet troops were shipped across the canal to its western shores and positioned on a thin strip of land between the canal and the border from which barbwire had already been removed. At dawn on June 22, thousands of Soviet soldiers were killed here by sudden and lethal enemy fire. With the canal behind them, the troops had nowhere to retreat.

The German troops on the other side of the border were also gathered in huge masses right along the border, and had also taken down the barbwire. If the Red Army had attacked a day earlier, the losses on the other side would have been just as great. The positioning of troops right along the border was extremely dangerous if the enemy attacked suddenly. But such a positioning was extremely convenient for carrying out a sudden attack.

Soviet generals never concealed the fact that strictly offensive objectives were set before them. General K. Galitsky, when talking about the concentration of Soviet troops in the Augustow region, stressed that the Soviet command did not believe in the possibility of a German attack, while the Soviet troops were being prepared to conduct an offensive operation.

The Soviet fronts directed against Eastern Prussia and Poland, as well as the fronts positioned against Romania and Hungary, were preparing strictly for an offensive. Major General A. I. Mikhalev acknowledged that the Soviet command did not plan to use the Southern and Southwestern fronts for defensive or counteroffensive actions. "The strategic goals were planned to be attained through the troops' switching to a decisively offensive course of action."¹⁴

The actions of the Red Army during the first days of the war speak best about Soviet intentions. General Zhukov coordinated the actions of the Southern and Southwestern fronts during the first days of the war, which were aimed at Romania and Hungary. Up until June 30, 1941, Zhukov insisted on advance and demanded that the commanders of the fronts exclusively attack. It was only in July that he and his colleagues concluded that the armies could no longer attack.

It is interesting to look at the Red Army's preparations for war through the eyes of those who were posted right on the border, especially on the Romanian border, because the most significant assault was supposed to take place there. Many books have been written about that time period. In June 1941, Hero of the Soviet Union Major General A.

A. Sviridov commanded the 144th Separate Reconnaissance Battalion of the 164th Rifle Division of the 17th Rifle Corps of the 12th Army posted in the Lvov-Chernovits bulge, on the Romanian border. The 17th Corps was in essence a mountain rifle corps. And the entire 12th Army was, in fact, a mountain army. Sviridov wrote of June 19, 1941: "Our division replaced border guards at the river Prut. Leaving the state border, they handed a fortified shoreline to us." From the Romanian side "we heard the cries from Romanian villages: the peasants were being relocated further away from the borders." "All of us, Soviet warriors were preparing to fight the enemy only on his lands."

Meanwhile, from June 13 to 20, the NKVD troops were relocating by force the population of the border regions from the White Sea to the Black Sea. The Germans relocated people from a strip of land twenty kilometers in width, while the Soviets removed people from land one hundred kilometers wide. The Germans relocated the population. The Soviets relocated some people and sent others to the GULAG. On June 19, the day described by Sviridov, the NKVD operation to clear the front strip entered its bloodiest stage.

After the forced deportation of the population, the border guards dismantled all mines and barbed wire obstacles on the Soviet border, and left the borders themselves. On strips tens of kilometers long, in the places where the Soviet assaults were being prepared, the border was opened, and the border guards had left, having handed the borders over to the Red Army. The reconnaissance battalions of the Soviet divisions came out right up to the borders.

Many years before the war in 1941, Shaposhnikov said that the "transfer of armies to wartime positions creates an obvious elevation in their military valiance and their morale." Shaposhnikov warned, however, that an army put on wartime regime and moved to the borders experienced nervous tension that couldn't be contained. Shaposhnikov also cautioned that the army couldn't be kept at the borders for long; it had to be brought into action. Stalin read Shaposhnikov's book with great care, knew it well, and often quoted it. In May 1940, Shaposhnikov was promoted to the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union. Officially, he was a deputy of the People's Commissar for Defense, but in practice he was Stalin's number one military advisor. By the middle of June 1941, Soviet armies were moved to the borders. The Soviet High Command knew that the commanders and soldiers were eager to enter combat, and that their assault drive couldn't be contained.

The Red Army was not separated from the enemy even by a thin line of NKVD border guards. Neither Zhukov, nor Timoshenko, nor Shaposhnikov had the power to order the guards to leave the borders. The guards were not under their jurisdiction. The guards were subordinate to Beria, the NKVD commissar. But Beria did not have the power to order the army units to replace his people on the borders. Only one man, Stalin, could have ordered the NKVD commissar to remove the border guards and the Defense commissar to move the army divisions to the borders.

Then, the unexpected happened. The German army attacked. Let's examine the consequences of the attack using the example of the 164th Division in which Sviridov served as battalion commander. There are two rivers in this region: the border river Prut, and the river Dniester that runs parallel to it on Soviet territory. If the division had been preparing for defense, there was no reason to move to the land between the two rivers; it would have been logical to dig trenches on the Dniester's eastern shores, using both rivers as water obstacles. Bridges should have been prepared for detonation. There should have been no supplies, hospitals, large army units, and headquarters stationed in the land between the two rivers, only

small groups of demolition experts and sappers. But the 164th Division (like all the others) was preparing for an invasion, so it crossed the Dniester, carrying with it hundreds of tons of ammunition, fuel, and supplies, as well as its headquarters, hospitals, and communication units, and stopped at the last border—the river Prut. There were 15,000 soldiers in the division, many cannon, many shells, and many cars. There were other divisions nearby, and all of them were between the two rivers—the Dniester was behind them, and the border river Prut ahead.

The Germans attacked, took over the bridge across the border river—the bridge was not mined—and began to send their units across. They bombed the bridges behind the Soviet divisions. To the north of this strip, the German 1st Tank Group broke through and encircled the Soviet front, cutting the Soviet troops off from their rears. The Soviet divisions were trapped. Masses of people and weapons (the 96th Mountain Rifle Division, 13,000 men strong, was also there) were in this trap. Nobody had prepared defenses, dug trenches or foxholes. Retreat was impossible—the Dniester was behind them, with no remaining bridges. A massacre followed.

Sviridov looked across the river Prut to the border bridge, and saw unending streams of German troops move across it. He remembered: “The bridge! We kept it in order to advance, and now we can’t blow it up. . . . All my military training was mostly done under the motto: only advance! Retreat was considered shameful, and we were not taught how to retreat. Now, when we were forced to retreat, we had no experience. We had to learn this art under terrible enemy fire.”

During the war, especially in the beginning, the Red Army suffered many defeats. In August and September of 1941, a military catastrophe of historical proportions occurred in the region around Kiev: 665,000 Soviet troops were encircled and captured by the German army. Near Smolensk, 310,000 Soviet soldiers and officers were surrounded. In 1942 on the Crimean front: Soviet troops were encircled near Khar’kov; the 2nd Shock Army, headed by General Vlasov, was surrounded and exterminated.

This kind of information was considered classified. Soviet historians and generals never wrote about these events. But there was an exception to the rule: June 22, 1941. The Soviet propaganda described without mercy everything related to that day, and denounced the Red Army before the entire world. Why was it allowed to talk about the lack of readiness for war?

In the library of the Military-Diplomatic Academy of the Soviet Army, I stumbled across a very small book. It was titled *A Brief Russian-German Military Phrase Book for Soldiers and Junior Commanders*. The booklet was published in Moscow on May 29, 1941, and additionally on June 5 the same booklet was published in Leningrad, Minsk, and Kiev. In total, five million copies were printed. In all Soviet books, including military textbooks, the price was on the last page. The price was not printed only on those books and instructions that related to the conduct of battle. These publications were treated like ammunition, and were handed out to the troops during training exercises, and, when necessary, before and during battle. No price was stamped on the little book I found. It was a battle document; it proved that the USSR was preparing for the war with Germany.

The phrase book was composed very simply and intelligently: a question in Russian, followed by the same question in German written in Russian letters, then in German in Latin letters. The answers were also printed in Russian and German with Latin and Cyrillic letters. It is quite simple to speak according to the booklet—if you do not know how to pronounce

the needed German phrase, simply point to the corresponding lines in the book and the Germans can read them themselves. The phrases are very interesting. For example: “Where is the water? Is it drinkable? Drink it first yourself.” Imagine the situation: the Soviet soldiers are fighting, defending their motherland, enter a Russian village, take out the phrase book from their packs and read syllable by syllable: “*Trinken Sie zuerst man selbst!*” But they would be taken for Germans in Russia! Here is another example: “What is this station called? Stop the broadcast, or I will shoot you! Bring the conductor! Where is the fuel? Where is the garage? Gather and bring here [so many] horses [farm animals], we will pay!” To communicate with the local populations, it is not a bad idea to know phrases such as: “Where are the German soldiers hiding? Where is the burghermeister? Is there an observation point on the steeple?” But, there was not one burghermeister or steeple in the Soviet Union. Another very important question: “Where are the stores?” The most important phrases are the following: “You do not need to be afraid! The Red Army will come soon!”

A former Soviet diplomat, Nikolai Berezhkov, who accompanied Molotov to Berlin in 1940, wrote in his memoirs *With a Diplomatic Mission in Berlin* that a German printing press worker once brought to the Soviet embassy a German-Russian phrase book of the same kind. For the Soviet embassy, the book was solid proof that the German army was preparing to invade the USSR. But in the USSR they were printing the same exact phrase books.

Soviet soldiers and officers were preparing for a victorious march on Berlin, but the war against Germany in 1941 didn't run according to plan. As a result, when Soviet commanders were captured, the Germans found quite interesting maps and curious orders in their bags. Thousands of soldiers had Russian-German and Russian-Romanian phrase books. Many simply did not think of the necessity to get rid of this compromising evidence.

The commander of the 5th Battery of the 14th Howitzer Regiment of the 14th Tank Division of the 7th Mechanized Corps, Yakov Iosifovich Dzhugashvili, son of Stalin, was no exception. He was taken prisoner, but at first he was not recognized. The senior lieutenant was betrayed by his subordinates. Stalin's son was searched and questioned. A letter was found in his pockets, from a certain junior lieutenant in the reserves named Victor: “I am at the training camps, I would like to be home by fall, but the planned walk to Berlin might hinder this.” The letter is dated June 11, 1941. The contents of this letter were reported to Hitler personally; he mentioned it on May 18, 1942.¹⁵ In June 1941, German intelligence officers showed the letter to Yakov Dzhugashvili and asked him to clarify the statement about the “planned walk to Berlin.” The questioning protocol recorded Stalin's son's reaction. He read the letter and quietly muttered: “Damn it!”

During questioning, Stalin's son was asked why the Soviet artillery, which had the best cannon and howitzers in the world, and in incredible numbers, fired so poorly. Stalin's son answered: “The maps let the Red Army down, because the war, contrary to expectations, unfolded to the east of the state border.”¹⁶ Stalin's son told the truth. In 1941, the Red Army fought without maps. There simply weren't any. But the artillery couldn't fire without maps. Direct aiming and firing was just a small fraction of the work done by artillery in war. Most of the time artillery fired beyond the horizon.

“It turned out that in Soviet Russia a map-making industry was created that surpassed everything that had ever been done before in its size, organization, volume, and quality of work,” concluded the Germans about the Soviet topographic services.¹⁷ How do we reconcile the best map-making industry in the world with the complete absence of maps? Lieutenant

General A. I. Lossev explained: "Storages of topographic maps, located unreasonably close to the border, were either seized by the enemy, or destroyed by the enemy during the first bomb raids. As a result, the troops lost 100 million maps."¹⁸

This is a modern-day evaluation, and the numbers are lowered. Lieutenant General M. K. Kudryavtsev, who under Stalin was director of the topographic services of the Red Army, said that during the first days of the war, and only in the Baltic, Western, and Kiev military districts, the Soviet troops destroyed during retreat over two hundred railcars of their own topographic maps.¹⁹ The smallest cargo railcar in the Soviet Union in 1941 could carry twenty tons. Even if we supposed that the smallest cars were used to store the maps, four thousand tons of maps were destroyed in the three districts. Kudryavtsev said that, on average, every railcar contained 1,033,000 maps. Two hundred cars equaled 200 million maps. Which of the two generals is right? They both are. One talked about what the German troops destroyed, 100 million, and the other added that the Soviets themselves destroyed 200 million maps, so they would not go to the enemy.

If the Soviet army planned to defend Moscow, Kursk, and Stalingrad, it needed maps of those regions. There was no reason to transport these maps to the state border. At the border, the army needed maps of border regions. And, if there was a plan to advance, the army needed maps of the territories that lay ahead. If the Soviet Union planned to take over large territories, it needed the corresponding number of maps to supply a multimillion-strong army. The Red Army did not save its maps in the border regions, because they were useless for defending the country. In 1941, the plans for the "liberation" of Europe crumbled, and the value of the maps that were kept in railcars on the border became zero. Millions of Russian-German and Russian-Romanian phrase books were burned along with the maps.

The Soviet population was expecting a war, but it didn't anticipate a German invasion. Therefore, once the Germans attacked, everyone was shocked. Major General of the KGB O. D. Gotsiridze remembered: "Before July 3, when Stalin made a public appearance, it was completely unclear as to what we were to do. Everyone had thought that the war would be quick and on foreign soil."²⁰

"The complete demoralization among our troops occurred because . . . the people had planned to fight on the enemy's territory, and our military commanders were dreaming of a blitzkrieg no less than the Germans were. But everything turned out not quite so happily. . . . The sudden need for defense turned into a total retreat on all fronts for the troops and the people."²¹

Stalin's Panic

It is very fortunate for Russia in her agony to have this great rugged war chief at her head. He is a man of massive outstanding personality, suited to the sombre and stormy times in which his life has been cast; a man of inexhaustible courage and will-power and a man direct and even blunt in speech, which, having been brought up in the House of Commons, I do not mind at all, especially when I have something to say of my own. Above all, he is a man with that saving sense of humour which is of high importance to all men and all nations, but particularly to great men and great nations. Stalin also left upon me the impression of a deep, cool wisdom and a complete absence of illusions of any kind

—WINSTON CHURCHILL, SPEECH IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,
SEPTEMBER 8, 1942

After Stalin's death, Nikita Khrushchev recounted that in 1941, having found out about the German invasion, Stalin panicked, retreated to his dacha-fortress outside Moscow, completely kept out of all affairs, did not receive anybody, did not ask about developments on the front, and did not answer telephone calls. Stalin was totally apathetic. He isolated himself from all state and party obligations. Stalin was extremely depressed for over a week, and only on July 1 did the members of the Politburo manage to force him to return to the reins of power. This story was accepted and repeated in thousands of books and essays. It served as the main proof of Stalin's lack of readiness for war.

After 1991, the Soviet archives became more accessible, and researchers saw logbooks documenting visitors to Stalin's office from 1927 to 1953. It turned out that Stalin worked extremely hard in the first days of the war. The entry from June 21, 1941, read: "The last [visitors] left at 11 PM." This did not at all mean that Stalin's workday ended. After the last visitors left, he could have worked on the documents himself, talked on the telephone, worked outside of the office, in his Kremlin apartment or at his dacha. Stalin began receiving visitors on June 22, 1941, at 5:45 AM. He worked for eleven hours without breaks. His visitors included Molotov,

Beria, Timoshenko, Mekhlis, Zhukov, Malenkov, Mikoyan, Kaganovich, Voroshilov, Vyshinskyi, Kuznetsov, Dimitrov, Manuilsky, Shaposhnikov, Vatutin, Kulik, and others.

The following week was one continuous workday for Stalin, with only brief breaks. Reception of visitors began at 3:20 AM (June 23), or at 1 AM (June 25), and ended the following morning. The meetings lasted five, six, twelve hours. Sometimes Stalin's workday lasted twenty-four hours, with short breaks. After this initial week of the war, the logbooks have nothing recorded for two consecutive days, June 29 and 30.

Khrushchev claimed that when the Germans attacked, Stalin got scared and isolated himself. Today, we know that right after the German invasion Stalin worked seven days in a row, as much as humanly possible. During the first moments, Stalin simply did not believe that Hitler had invaded. Stalin had calculated all possible moves, and none of them included an attack by Hitler. During the first week of the war, Stalin herded his troops into an attack. He should have been giving orders for defense, but he resisted. Finally, on June 28, he found out that the Western Front was surrounded, the 4th Army was destroyed, and the 3rd, 10th, and 13th armies were encircled. Only then did Stalin finally understand that his plans for the "liberation" of Europe were over. When he arrived at the People's Commissariat of Defense on June 29, Stalin learned the true dimensions of the utter failure of the Western Front. There, Stalin exploded in anger at Timoshenko and Zhukov, bringing the latter to tears. Anastas Mikoyan recollected: "Stalin was despondent. After leaving the Commissariat, he said: 'Lenin left us a grand legacy, and we, his followers, flushed that legacy down the toilet.' We were shocked by that statement. Was everything lost for good? In the end, we ascribed those words to Stalin's emotionally affected state."¹

Stalin realized that he could not fix anything. The socialist country was capable of crushing others, but it couldn't compete with other countries in peacetime. From June 22, 1941, the Soviet Union was destined for demise. Sooner or later, it was bound to collapse. It could survive only by consuming everything around it. Otherwise, it was doomed. The Soviet Union could exist only if the Soviet people would have no opportunities to compare their lives with the lives of people in surrounding countries. Therefore, Stalin's main idea was to destroy the capitalism surrounding the Soviet Union. All of Stalin's plans were simple, logical, and understandable: complete victory was only possible on a global scale.

Hitler understood this as well: "The Bolshevized world will be able to hold only if it encompasses everything."² On June 22, 1941, Hitler delivered a suicidal but lethal attack on Communism. No matter how events unfolded afterward, Stalin could no longer conquer the whole world, which was the equivalent of his demise. On June 30, 1941, Molotov, Beria, Malenkov, and others entered Stalin's room in his dacha. Anastas Mikoyan, a member of Stalin's Politburo, left a wonderful description of this episode:

We came to Stalin's dacha. Found him in the small dining room, sitting in his armchair. Upon seeing us, he seemed to shrink into the armchair, then look at us questioningly. Then he asked: 'What did you come for?' He had a wary, strange look on his face—and the question he asked was no less strange. As a matter of fact, he should have summoned us all himself. I had no doubts: he had decided that we had arrived to arrest him. Molotov, speaking for us all, said that power had to be concentrated if the country were to get back on its feet, and that a State Committee of Defense had to be created. 'Who's in charge?'

asked Stalin. When Molotov answered that he, Stalin, was in power, the latter looked at Molotov with surprise, but said nothing. 'Fine,' he eventually pronounced.³

The members of the Politburo hadn't come to arrest Stalin. They needed Stalin as a symbol, a flag around which the remnants of a crushed division would rally in battle. They talked of saving the country, but Stalin did not listen to them. Without taking Europe, without expanding the Soviet Union's borders, the USSR would sooner or later crumble. Stalin had lost the country founded by Lenin. In 1941, only Stalin could appreciate the full weight of the German invasion. In 1941, the members of the Politburo could not fully understand that Hitler's invasion meant death for the Soviet Union. The Politburo forced Stalin to resume power, and Stalin, with a careless wave of the hand, returned, fully aware that the cause he had worked for his whole life was dead.

If It Weren't for Winter!

Future historians will come to the conclusion that, if one considers the military situation, the invasion of Russia was a political mistake and all military efforts were doomed from the start.

—COLONEL GENERAL HERMANN HOTH, *PANZER OPERATIONS*

During the war with the Soviet Union, Goebbels's "Reich Ministry for People's Enlightenment and Propaganda" quickly filled newspaper and magazine pages with thousands of photographs: German automobiles stuck in Russian mud, a horse being flogged because it couldn't pull a cart out of the terrible slush, blizzards covering tanks with a thick layer of snow, and gusts of wind ripping the summer hat off a poor German soldier's head.

The core principle of propaganda is visual appeal. Goebbels showed the shocked Germans back home tons of chronicles: mud, mud, mud, impassable mud, endless fields, plains, snow, and hurricane-strength wind knocking the soldiers off their feet. (The photos were taken on an airfield, where a three-engine J-52's propellers helped the storm, adding wind—and drama—to the situation.) If it were not for winter . . . from German staffs and memoirs of generals were added to Goebbels's propaganda, and featured descriptions of the horrors of the Russian winter, the impassable mud, and the unimaginable lack of roads.

It would seem that Marxist historians should have refuted these claims, so that nobody repeated the conclusions of Hitler's defenders. However, Marxist historians not only did not refute those claims, but they joined the chorus of Nazi voices. Marxist propagandists declared that the Russians were completely unprepared for war, and it wasn't them that defeated Hitler: all the credit should go to the endless Russian plains, the mud, and the fierce winter.

Why did the Communists need to repeat the Nazi lies? The answer was simple: they needed to prove that the Soviet Union could not have invaded Europe. They had to demonstrate weakness. Here is an example: "Artillery, motorcycles, trucks, and even tanks got stuck in the impenetrable mud; airplane wheels got stuck in the ground on air bases. The supply

of ammunition, fuel, and produce to the front was drastically reduced. [An] early winter suddenly replaced an unusually rainy autumn. When the ground froze in November, many cannon and vehicles were left right there on the spot, where they had gotten stuck in the mud several weeks earlier.”¹

The combined power of Nazi and Communist propaganda turned out to be so strong that the Hitler legend about the frost and winter, the lack of roads, and the vast open spaces was repeated by people who were wise and far removed from Goebbels’s propaganda. It is no surprise that to the question about the reasons for Hitler’s defeat, today’s German schoolchildren answer in unison: winter, frost, and open spaces.

I will pretend to agree that if it weren’t for winter, frost, and vast open spaces, Hitler would have crushed the Red Army and taken the Soviet Union. But if Britain was not an island, and protected by the English Channel from Hitler’s tanks, Hitler would have strangled England as well. And if the African desert wasn’t hot and full of sand, if there was a tunnel under the Mediterranean Sea to supply German troops with fuel and ammunition, Hitler would have kicked the British out of Libya and Egypt, and taken Africa. And if America was not across the ocean but in Europe, right under Hitler’s nose, and if America was a small country, the size of Belgium, Hitler could have crushed America, too. And if the Antarctic had a climate like France, Hitler could have turned it into resorts for his generals, with palm trees and beaches.

When we are told of tanks getting stuck in the mud, we should remember their specific power and their specific pressure on the ground. The best German tank of 1941, the T-III A, had a specific pressure of 0.94 kilograms per square centimeter of support surface. Of course it sank in the mud! Its specific power was only 13.9 horsepower per ton of weight. The rest of the German models were even weaker. These tanks were designed by people who simply did not understand the nature of war. These tanks could not compete with the Soviet tanks, and yet we are told that the mud was to blame.

In February 1940, the Red Army broke through the impenetrable Mannerheim Line. At the same time, the German army was simply refusing to fight in France. German generals, by blaming the weather in France, sabotaged orders to invade issued by the High Command. “Here, luckily, nature intervened and forced the postponement of the set date, which between the fall of 1939 and the end of January 1940 changed fifteen times.”² The order to start the invasion was postponed many times even after January 1940. German generals were unprepared to fight in France even in April.

In 1941, Hitler fought near Moscow. Here there was no Arctic frost like in Finland, no deep snow, no swamps. The topography around Moscow was an invader’s dream: there were no rocky rivers and no steep shores. Soviet defenses near Moscow did not compare to the Mannerheim Line. But Hitler got stuck. We are told: the Red Army could not fight, and that is why breaking through the Mannerheim Line took so much time. Nobody remembers the frost, snow, and impassable terrain in Finland. But the German army got stuck at Moscow’s gate only because the winter had prevented it.

On August 10, 1941, Colonel General Halder wrote in his journal: “The exhausted German infantry will be unable to oppose with decisive attack measures the enemy’s efforts. . . . At the current moment, our troops are heavily exhausted and experience heavy losses.”³ On the following day, Halder wrote: “The troops are exhausted. What we are now undertaking is the last and questionable attempt to avert a transition to a war of attrition.

The command has only very limited resources. . . . We have thrown our last forces into battle.”⁴ The blitzkrieg was already choking in August. The Germans were running out of strength, and the advance stopped. Hitler’s army was so weak and unprepared for war that two months after the start of the war offense was out of the question. On August 22, 1941, Halder wrote: “The Fuehrer’s note is full of contradictions. . . . The OKH’s position became insufferable due to the Fuehrer’s meddling and attacks. No one else but himself can bear the responsibility for the contradictory orders. . . . In the afternoon, our arguments and discussions were interrupted by a telephone conversation with Field Marshal von Bock, who once again stressed that his troops will be unable to defend themselves for long in the positions they took when they counted that an offensive on Moscow was coming.”⁵ September 5, 1941: “Our units surrendered to the enemy [at] the bend of the frontline near Elnya.”⁶ In the most strategically significant region of the theater of operations, the Army Group Center was unable to resist the pressure of the Soviet 24th Army and surrendered the staging ground they needed for an attack on Moscow.

Marshal K. K. Rokossovskii remembered: “Upon a realistic evaluation of the situation and a consideration of the coming winter, the enemy was only left with one choice—immediate retreat covering great distance.”⁷

Why didn’t the Germans retreat? On September 13, 1941, Halder wrote: “At the current moment, we cannot forecast the number of troops that can be freed from the Eastern Front upon arrival of winter, and the number of troops that will be needed for conducting operations in the following year.”⁸ This entry shows that the blitzkrieg was already over before the snow, before the mud. The war had already turned into a war of attrition—a prolonged war lethal for Germany.

On May 29, 1942, Hitler watched the famous Soviet film *German Defeat near Moscow*. In Henry Piker’s *Hitler’s Table Conversations*, Hitler’s comments are recorded in the entry for that day: “This winter we experienced especially harsh trials, because our soldiers’ clothing [and] the level of their motorization and supply did not in any way correspond to the conditions of that winter, when the temperature dropped below 50 [degrees] Celsius.”⁹ “Then the first German prisoners come, who form hordes without coats, gloves, without winter clothing. They dance from the cold, their hands thrust deep into their pockets, which they take out from time to time to rub their ears and noses! . . . Finally, the frozen German tanks, trucks, and cannon stretch in an endless file; all are abandoned, because the General Staff of land forces did not prepare in time sufficient amounts of frost-resistant fuel and winter clothing.”¹⁰

The following year brought Stalingrad. Moscow in 1941 didn’t teach Hitler anything. In Stalingrad, German troops once again were left without warm underwear. The main question is: what conclusions did Hitler and his generals draw from their catastrophic performance in the Russian winter? In 1941, they took no measures to supply their military operations during the winter. What was done to prepare for the following winter? On April 5, 1942, Hitler said: “In the central zone, we must immediately plant all the marshlands and swamps with cane, so that with the coming of the next winter we can stand the horrible Russian frost.”¹¹

A Model War

The victory of socialism in one country does not at one stroke eliminate all wars in general. On the contrary, it presupposes wars.

—VLADIMIR I. LENIN, *THE MILITARY PROGRAM OF
THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION*

A Soviet historian's account of Japanese-German relations in World War II went as follows: "The German leaders had especially strong expectations from their Japanese allies. They really wanted Japan to be the first to start military action against the USSR. . . . But the Japanese leaders evaded talks with Germany. Only in March 1941 did the Japanese minister of foreign affairs, Iosuke Matsuoka, arrive in Berlin. . . . Matsuoka refused to determine the deadline for Japanese action against the USSR, which led to a strong clash between him and Hitler."¹

The shortest route between Berlin and Tokyo lay straight through Moscow, and on his return trip from Berlin, the Japanese minister of foreign affairs, Matsuoka, stopped briefly in Moscow. Here, on April 13, 1941, he signed a pact of neutrality between the Soviet Union and Japan. Both countries pledged to "maintain peaceful and friendly relations and mutually respect each other's territorial integrity and independence. . . . In the event that one of the sides becomes the victim of military actions from one or several other nations, the other side of the pact will observe neutrality for the duration of the entire conflict."²

The neutrality pact between the USSR and Japan was a remarkable achievement for Stalin's diplomats and a crushing blow to Hitler's plans. Japan was Germany's ally, but it refused to fight against the Soviet Union. Moreover, Japan signed a pact with the Soviet Union instead. "When Matsuoka informed Ribbentrop about the high probability of a Soviet-Japanese pact, the head of German diplomacy stated that one would be wise not to involve oneself too intimately with the Soviet Union, but watch the events in the region."³ The Japanese government, however, had its own opinion on the matter. On April 14, the day after the signing of the Soviet-Japanese pact, Goebbels wrote in his diary that the agreement caused

a great sensation. For Germany, this was quite an unpleasant sensation.⁴ “The signing of the Soviet-Japanese neutrality agreement was a great surprise for Germany. Ribbentrop ordered the German ambassador in Tokyo to demand an explanation from the Japanese government.”⁵ An explanation was provided. Matsuoka told the German ambassador in Tokyo that “if Germany and the Soviet Union were to start fighting, not a single Japanese premier or minister of foreign affairs could keep the nation neutral. Japan will ally with Germany in attacking Russia, whatever the situation. Pacts of neutrality do not matter in this affair.”⁶ But this intent never materialized. Japan didn’t attack the Soviet Union.

On April 13, 1941, right after the signing of the agreement between Japan and the USSR, Matsuoka headed for the train station in Moscow, on his way to Tokyo. According to protocol, many officials accompanied him. Suddenly, the rules of protocol were broken. At the last minute before the train left, Stalin appeared on the platform. He usually never met anyone or saw anyone off. On that day, Stalin was in a remarkably good mood. Obviously, the train departure was delayed. Stalin laughed and joked. He walked with the Japanese minister right to the steps of the railcar, and here he did something entirely uncharacteristic for him—he embraced the Japanese minister and proclaimed that the Soviet Union and Japan would remain friends forever. Among those seeing off the Japanese minister was the German military attaché—Stalin noticed and also embraced him, declaring that Germany and the Soviet Union would also remain friends. Stalin’s behavior was very uncommon. He was usually very discreet. He never embraced anyone in the presence of outsiders. Many historians explained this unusual behavior as Stalin’s commitment to peace, as proof that he attempted to avoid war with Japan and Germany at any cost.

Exactly ten weeks later, on June 22, 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Soon, Stalin found himself on the brink of defeat. At this critical moment, the Japanese government kept its word to the Soviets and remained neutral. In that same year, 1941, Japan attacked the U.S. Navy at Pearl Harbor, triggering the war between the United States and Japan. This was advantageous for Stalin, and despite the signed pact, he started secret preparations to attack Japan. “They did not know Stalin well in Tokyo,” wrote one observer. “If the Japanese had at least superficially acquainted themselves with the lifestyle and career path of the great follower of Lenin’s legacy, they would have noticed that his methods always remained the same: make an alliance with somebody against somebody else, and follow it with a stab in the back to the ally once he becomes useless.”⁷

Stalin kept his intentions secret until the right time, but in the beginning of 1943 he told the American president about his decision to attack Japan. Stalin had planned his sudden attack on Japan not for 1943, when America was engaged in a difficult war and needed help, but at the very last moments of the war, when Japan would be already on the verge of defeat. Stalin could have helped the United States much earlier. He had the capacity to drastically quicken Japan’s defeat. The United States had a very powerful strategic air force, but they had to fly to Japan across the largest ocean in the world, and then fly back without refueling. Raids on Japan could also be carried out from islands in the Pacific Ocean, but these islands had to be taken first, and therefore it was first necessary to achieve naval domination. And even after taking the islands, the Americans still had to fly several thousand kilometers to their targets and back. Each plane had to carry a large amount of fuel and an insignificant number of bombs. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was right next to Japan.

“Cordell Hill, the American Secretary of State, tried to obtain from Moscow permission for the American air force to use Soviet military airbases in the Far East.”⁸ Stalin firmly refused. President Roosevelt sent messages to Stalin on December 30, 1942, and January 8, 1943, urging the Russian leader to allow American air force units to be stationed on bases in the Soviet Far East. Stalin answered the messages with an uncompromising “no.”⁹

If Stalin had given the Americans the opportunity to use Soviet air bases, instead of making long flights to Japan from the faraway islands, every plane could have completed several short flights with a large load of bombs. In that case, the American raids on Japanese targets would have been considerably more effective. But it was in Stalin’s interest that the war between Japan and the United States be stretched as long as possible.

By the way, Stalin allowed America to use several Soviet air bases in the Poltava region for bombing Germany. American B-17 strategic bombers took off from the airfields at Poltava and flew to bomb Germany. Their takeoffs were covered by Soviet fighters, which accompanied them to the length of their radius of action. At the same time, other waves of American bombers flew out of Britain. Having dropped bombs on German cities and factories, these bombers landed on the airfields at Poltava. They were met by Soviet fighters, which covered them during landing. But Stalin did not give permission to use the air bases in Nakhodka and Petropavlovsk for bombing Japan. Stalin waited for a complete depletion of Japanese forces in a prolonged war, and prepared his own attack. As Japan weakened, Stalin strengthened the preparation for a war against it. Stalin called Japan an aggressor for the first time on November 6, 1944.¹⁰ On April 5, 1945, the USSR leadership cancelled the Soviet-Japanese neutrality pact.

In the summer of 1944, Stalin told Marshal A. M. Vasilevsky that he would be the chief commander of Soviet troops in a war against Japan.¹¹ The initial figures of the concentration of our troops in the Amur, Pacific Coast, and Trans-Baikal regions were sketched out in the fall of 1944. At the same time, rough calculations of the resources needed for a war in the Far East were made.¹²

Vasilevsky was one of the most talented commanders in the history of the Soviet Union. His talent became apparent during the war. In 1940, he was given the rank of major general. “[As] deputy chief of the Operations branch of the General Staff, he worked on the operational section of planning the strategic deployment of Soviet armed forces on the Northern, Northwestern, and Western Fronts.”¹³

A month after the beginning of the German invasion, Stalin appointed Vasilevsky as chief of the General Staff’s Operations Directorate. Vasilevsky was responsible now not just for a separate (although the most important) sector of the front, but for all the plans of the war on all fronts. Two months later, Stalin promoted Vasilevsky to lieutenant general. Half a year later, Vasilevsky became colonel general. One month later, Vasilevsky received yet another promotion: Stalin named him chief of the General Staff, the central brain of the Red Army, and entrusted to him the preparations for offensive operations in the Stalingrad region. In October 1942, Colonel General Vasilevsky became Stalin’s deputy. According to Vasilevsky’s plans, all command and communications posts in the Stalingrad region were moved to the very front lines. He also moved there all air bases, hospitals, huge supplies of shells, cartridges, fuel, and lubricants. Until the very last moment, Soviet troops did not know anything about what they were going to do. By keeping his offensive preparations secret from his own troops, Vasilevsky managed to keep them secret from the enemy as well. And then, a

sudden, crushing attack followed. All the so-called “mistakes of 1941,” Vasilevsky repeated at Stalingrad, because they were not mistakes at all, but a preparation for sudden attack.

Vasilevsky received the rank of General of the Army for the defeat of the surrounded German formations near Stalingrad. He only carried this title for twenty-nine days; after the Stalingrad operation, Stalin made him a Marshal of the Soviet Union. In the summer of 1944, during the peak of the war with Germany, Stalin not only gave Marshal Vasilevsky the task of planning a sudden attack on Japan, but appointed him to head all Soviet troops in a war against Japan. But Stalin had no intention of landing his troops on the Japanese islands. He had more attractive targets. Korea, Manchuria, the greater part of China, and French Indochina (Vietnam) were all occupied by Japan. Stalin planned to “liberate” them and take them under his control.

Starting in the summer of 1944, Soviet military might in the Far East began to grow, but it could not be observed from outside. There was rearmament and strengthening of divisions, corps, and armies, as well as a storing of the supplies necessary for a sudden and crushing attack. Roads, air bases, bridges, and command and communications posts were being built near the borders with great intensity. Soviet commanders, on orders from Moscow, moved ammunition and fuel storages and hospitals to the borders.

A movement of regiments, brigades, and divisions from the German front to the Far East began in the early spring of 1945. “The most important aspect of the preparations for the operation was the fact that they all had to be done before an official declaration of war on Japan.”¹⁴ Exceptional measures of concealment were taken. All sergeants and staff sergeants in the troops transferred to the Far East wore the insignia of privates. Junior officers had sergeant epaulets, and the senior officers wore the insignia of lieutenants and captains. Generals had fewer stars on their epaulets than they had earned. A major general could wear the epaulets of a lieutenant colonel or a major. Marshal Vasilevsky himself arrived in the Far East with the papers for a “Colonel General Vasilyev” and in the appropriate uniform.¹⁵

In May 1945, the troop transfer took on truly gigantic dimensions. “The mass regrouping of troops began with a transport by railroad from Eastern Prussia of the 5th Army, which had gained rich experience in breaking through fortified regions and operating in forested territories.”¹⁶ The 39th Army, also from Eastern Prussia, and the 53rd from Czechoslovakia were simultaneously moved. The 6th Tank Guards Army was to play the decisive role in the defeat of Japanese armies. It was moved from the Prague region. To conceal the movement of the tank army, the tankers not only changed their epaulets, but the insignia on them as well—they temporarily became medics, repairmen, and construction workers. Most importantly, the tanks and the rest of the heavy equipment of the 6th Tank Guards Army were left behind in Czechoslovakia. In Mongolia, near the state border where the tank army was to be relocated, new tanks had been arriving straight from factories in the Urals. They were prepared and carefully concealed well ahead of time.¹⁷ The same exact procedure was performed in the transfer of most artillery, air force, and other formations and regiments. For example, in June and July of 1945, 1,155 war planes of the newest models were sent straight from the factories to the air bases in the Far East.¹⁸ During this time, the pilots and engineer personnel of certain air force regiments, divisions, and corps were transported by railroad, without their equipment. New planes already awaited them in the Far East. On top of all this, the 6th and 7th Bomber Corps and two military-transport air force divisions were moved from air bases in Germany and Poland.¹⁹

The strategic regrouping of Soviet troops was carried out at a distance of nine thousand to twelve thousand kilometers. A regrouping of troops on such a scale was being performed for only the second time in human history. The first time was in May and June 1941, from the east toward the German borders. In 1945, it was done in the opposite direction. The commands of two fronts, three field armies and one tank army, fifteen rifle, artillery, mechanized, and tank corps—all those were moved to the Far East. The smaller units moved there together with their commands: thirty-six rifle, artillery, and air-defense artillery divisions, fifty-three brigades, and over a hundred separate regiments and battalions were moved there too.²⁰ In just three months, over 500,000 soldiers and officers were transported from Central Europe to the Far East. To minimize the volume of transports, a large part of the brigades, divisions, corps, and even an entire tank army were transported without their equipment. But some formations still had to be moved with their weapons and military equipment, and the number of arms transported with the troops was enormous: 3,340 tanks and self-propelled guns, 7,500 cannons and howitzers, 3,600 mortars, 1,100 rocket-launching field installations (“Katyusha”), and 1,400 warplanes.²¹ It took 135,756 railcars to transport this mass of troops and weapons.²²

During a surprise offensive operation, it would be necessary to supply a tremendous number of troops, which would be continuously moving forward. The troops immediately would need to receive hundreds of thousands of tons of ammunition, fuel, lubricants, food, and everything else that was indispensable for advancing. The transport of such quantities of cargo over distances of hundreds of kilometers could only be done by railroad. However, the Soviet Union’s railroads had a broad gauge, while Manchuria’s and China’s railroads had a narrow gauge. It was decided to re-weld the railroad gauge there to the Soviet standard. Special brigades of railroad troops with the necessary equipment were prepared for this.

The arriving cargo was unloaded directly onto the ground in each border station’s vicinity. Part of the cargo was not unloaded at all. It remained in the railcars, ready to follow the advancing troops across the border. “By the beginning of the operation, there were over 1,500 cisterns with fuel on the railroads of the Far East. . . . This imposed a great strain on the functioning of the railroads.”²³

After the strategic regrouping of the troops was complete, the three Soviet fronts contained eleven field armies, three air defense armies, three air force armies, one tank army, and four separate air force corps.²⁴ In addition, the Pacific fleet, the Amur flotilla, NKVD troops, and the armed forces of Mongolia were all under the command of the Soviet commander-in-chief in the Far East. The formation of Soviet troops included 1,747,465 men, 29,835 guns and mortars, 5,250 tanks, and 5,171 airplanes.²⁵ The Pacific fleet had 417 warships, including 78 submarines, and 1,618 airplanes, including 1,312 combat aircraft. The Amur navy flotilla had 126 warships and 68 combat aircraft.²⁶ Colonel Generals Vasiliev, Morozov, Maksimov, and Zolotov (in reality, Marshals of the Soviet Union A. M. Vasilevsky, R. Y. Malinovsky, K. A. Meretskov, and General of the Army M. V. Zakharov) arrived at the secret command posts ahead of the troops. To maintain secrecy, the “colonel generals” wore plain black jumpsuits over their uniforms, without any insignia, and during their trips to the vicinity of the state border they wore the uniforms of regular NKVD border troops.

A stream of cargo flowed in from the United States at the same time Soviet forces were being transferred out of Central and Eastern Europe. Stalin was the most cunning diplomat of the twentieth century. He demanded that the president of the United States supply food

and fuel for all Soviet troop formations. "An agreement was reached with the United States about the concentration of three months' supplies and fuels for our troops in this theater of military operations."²⁷ The United States also supplied airplanes, armored cars, automobiles, radios, telephone cables, medicines, optical devices, and much more.

Stalin gave instructions to the commander-in-chief in the Far East, Marshal Vasilevsky, and to the other front commanders back in Moscow. There were very few documents about the preparations for a surprise attack on Japan: one notebook with calculations and one map. These documents remained in the Kremlin. Marshals and generals had to remember their objectives without using any papers. Upon arrival in the Far East, the front commanders began detailed planning and calculations. "A strictly limited number of people were allowed to see the drafting of plans for the fronts. Only the commander, the member of the military council, the chief of staff, and the chief of the operations directorate of the front knew the plans in full."²⁸

The Trans-Baikal Front was deployed in a territory stretching 2,300 kilometers, and it was supposed to carry out a surprise attack eight hundred kilometers deep into enemy territory. There were 648,000 troops, 2,359 tanks and self-propelled guns, 1,324 warplanes, 9,668 guns and mortars, and 369 salvo-fire field installations ("Katyusha").²⁹ Four men, without secretaries, draftsmen, or other personnel, did all the planning of military operations for this mass of troops.

The 1st Far Eastern Front had 589,000 troops, 11,430 guns and mortars, 274 salvo-fire field installations, 1,974 tanks and self-propelled guns, and 1,137 combat planes. All the planning on this front was also done by just four men.³⁰

The Trans-Baikal and the 1st Far Eastern Fronts were to attack in converging directions. Between these two attack formations there was the relatively weaker 2nd Far Eastern Front, which had 333,000 troops, 5,988 guns and mortars, 72 salvo-fire field installations, 917 tanks and self-propelled guns, and 1,260 combat planes.³¹ A classic encirclement operation was being prepared, with a relatively weak middle and two extremely powerful flank formations. The newness lay in the size of the operation. All three fronts were meant to advance simultaneously along the front line of 5,130 kilometers. Such an operation was unprecedented. (Let's hope that it will never again be repeated.)

Stalin issued a special directive, which required the front commanders to define the objectives to the armies verbally, without producing any written documents.³² After receiving an objective, the army commanders were to commence the planning of the operation. General M. Gareev was at that time a major in the operational staff sector of the 5th Army of the 1st Far Eastern Front: "Near the station Muchnaya, we were shut in a separate, heavily guarded house, [from] which no one was allowed outside. Guards brought in food. We had to work almost around the clock. ³³ Exchanging letters with questions regarding the operation preparations was forbidden, even in code. The army commanders described the objectives to the division commanders verbally, using only a map. Radios only received signals. In the artillery units, communication by radio was permitted only after the beginning of artillery softening-up, and in the other units after the beginning of the attack."³⁴

The unloading of arriving troops and all troop movements took place during the night. The arriving troops were immediately sent to special areas, where hiding places had been prepared in advance. Before beginning the offensive, the main forces were to be kept back, and part of the artillery was to move closer to the border and be ready to open fire.³⁵ Special

squads of the fortified regions worked in the fields harvesting hay in all the areas visible to the enemy. The officers went to the local resorts and sanatoriums during their leave. The enemy was also confused by the fact that the local population from the border territories was not relocated, and their daily life was not affected by any changes. Training exercises were conducted at the same time as the troop movements, so the local population took everything they saw for regular military drills.³⁶

The core principle of strategy is the concentration of force against weakness. The most powerful Soviet formation, the Trans-Baikal Front, was deployed against the weakest area of the Japanese defenses. But even here the forces were not spread out evenly along the entire border. Instead, extremely powerful assault groups gathered. Between these groups remained significant gaps, which were not covered by any troops. For example, on the Trans-Baikal Front, there was a gap of two hundred kilometers between the 17th Army and the 6th Tank Guards Army.³⁷ Long before World War II, there was a chain of fortified regions erected along the border in the Far East. These regions housed a significant number of troops that were specially trained for conducting long defense operations. But in the summer of 1945, Japan found itself on the verge of defeat. Therefore, the Soviet troops stationed in the fortified regions were issued orders to leave their armored concrete fortifications and reinforce the assault formations.³⁸

On August 6, 1945, the American air force dropped an atomic bomb over Hiroshima, and on August 9, over Nagasaki. Japan was on its deathbed. And at this moment, on August 9, 1945, the Red Army carried out its sudden and crushing attack against Japanese troops in Manchuria and China. The operations of all the armies were planned according to the principle of surprise attack and overpowering the enemy with the immediate use of gigantic force. Even in secondary locations, the actions immediately took on an active and maneuvering character.³⁹ On August 8, the Soviet government declared: "This kind of action is the only measure capable of speeding up the coming of peace, to save people from further suffering and misery, and give the Japanese people the opportunity to rid themselves of danger and destruction."⁴⁰

In the evening of August 8, 1945, the Japanese ambassador in Moscow was notified of a Soviet statement, which read: "Starting the next day, August 9, the Soviet Union will consider itself in a state of war with Japan."⁴¹ On August 9, the Soviet armies carried out their surprise attack. One could ask: How was it possible to declare the war on August 8 and to deliver a sudden strike on August 9? The answer is that in Vladivostok the day begins seven hours earlier than in Moscow. Military actions began on August 9 at 12:10 AM Vladivostok time.⁴² At that moment in Moscow, it was still 5:10 PM on August 8. No one had yet warned the Japanese ambassador. Then, when night fell in Moscow, the Japanese ambassador was summoned to the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and at 11:50 PM Moscow time, it was announced that a war would begin on the following day. In Moscow, there were still 10 minutes left until the next day, but in the Far East the new day had long since begun. At the time of the announcement, it was already 6:50 AM. War had been going on for over six hours. The most important events had already happened: a sudden Soviet air raid destroyed the Japanese air bases, the border defenses were liquidated, and powerful tank formations entered Manchuria and China, continuing an unstoppable thrust forward.

The Japanese ambassador in Moscow was told about the beginning of the war, but he still had to reach the embassy and communicate with his government. All the telephone

and telegraph lines were not working. Even in normal circumstances, radio connection with Japan, which was almost halfway around the world, was difficult. But here the circumstances were not normal: someone had tampered with the radio stations. In other words, the Japanese government found out that war was declared after a huge delay and through entirely different channels. In military language, this could be called “preparation and carrying out of a sudden initial attack with the opening of a new strategic front.”⁴³ In the language of politics, this was called a “just and humane action by the USSR.”⁴⁴

After the first crushing attack, Marshal R. Y. Malinovsky told his troops on August 10, 1945: “The Soviet people cannot live and work in peace while the Japanese imperialists brandish arms at our far-eastern borders and await a convenient moment to attack our motherland.”⁴⁵ Malinovsky spoke four days after an atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima and one day after an atomic bomb had been dropped on Nagasaki. Those two Japanese cities lay in ruins unseen in human history, and Malinovsky was fully aware of the fact. Did the “Japanese imperialists,” after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, really have nothing else to do but “await a convenient moment”?

In March 1939, Stalin had accused Great Britain and France of wanting to draw Europe into war while they remained on the sidelines: “In the politics of non-intervention, there is a desire not to hinder the aggressors while they do their dirty deeds, not to interfere, for example, with Japan involving itself in a war against China . . . the goal is to let all the participants of the conflict become engulfed by the quicksand of war, and let them weaken and exhaust each other. Then, when they are sufficiently weakened, one can enter the scene with fresh forces, act, of course, ‘in the interests of peace,’ and dictate to the weakened war participants all the terms of peace.”⁴⁶ Stalin always ascribed his own intentions to his enemies. Stalin did everything that he accused Great Britain and France of doing. Now, Japan was exhausted by the war, and it was time to intervene “in the interests of peace”: “The Soviet government, striving for the quickest possible restoration of peace, issued a declaration of war.”⁴⁷

The offensive operation by Soviet armies in August 1945 was truly a lightning war. “The forward battalions, accompanied by border guards, silently crossed the border without opening fire, and before the Japanese defenders had time to occupy them, took control of long-term enemy defense structures in a series of locations.”⁴⁸ In just the first day, the 6th Tank Guards Army completed a thrust of 150 kilometers. The advance took place in extremely difficult conditions. Manchurian summers were extremely rainy, especially in August. Rivers overflowed, and fields and roads turned into impassable swamps. The troops of the 1st and 2nd Far Eastern Fronts had to cross the Amur River, one of the largest rivers on the planet. It stretched 2,850 kilometers in length. In August 1945, the Amur’s water levels were four meters higher than usual and flooded thousands of square kilometers. The rivers that flowed into the Amur, among them the Ussuri and the Sungari, also overflowed.

The Trans-Baikal Front faced an entirely different situation—the tank columns advanced through waterless steppes in thick clouds of dust. The temperature was 30 degrees Celsius, sometimes even higher. Ahead, the troops had to overcome the Great Khingan Range, behind which unfolded a territory of rice fields completely unfamiliar to the Soviet soldiers.

It is claimed that the Japanese troops put up weak or no resistance. That is not true. The Japanese soldiers were the most tenacious in the world. They did not yet know about the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the Japanese government was in no hurry to tell the

troops about the catastrophe. The Japanese resistance stopped only after the troops received orders to capitulate. Before these orders came in, the Japanese fought to the death. But their tenacity was met with maneuvers. The territories fought over were huge, and Soviet troops simply bypassed the points of resistance, without engaging in prolonged combat.

Soviet troops did the impossible. The 6th Tank Guards Army overcame the Great Khingan Range, reached the open areas, and completed an incredible advance toward the Yellow Sea. In eleven days, with battles, its troops covered 810 kilometers. Assault units and paratroops operated ahead of them, taking air bases, bridges, and ferries. Here is a list of just some of the cities around which paratroops were landed successfully: Kharbin, Chongjin, Port-Artur, Mukden, Pyongyang, and Khynnam. The masters of blitzkrieg, German generals, gave high marks to the actions of the 6th Tank Guards Army and other Soviet troops. Major General F. W. von Mellentin recounted: "To illustrate the growing flexibility of the Red Army's military actions and its capacity to successfully conduct broad and decisive tank operations, I want to point to Marshal Malinovsky's sensational advance into Manchuria in August 1945."⁴⁹

Von Mellentin continued to say:

Other Soviet troops acted just as decisively and successfully. The Soviet navy sank Japanese ships, and landed naval assault forces on Sakhalin, in North Korea, and on the Kuril Islands. After entering the Sungari River, the Amur flotilla supported the advance of the 15th Army right up to the Kharbin Ranges. It constantly received rifle companies on board, and functioned as a sort of vanguard for the main forces of the 15th Army. In ten days of advance, the main forces of the flotilla, together with the troops of the 15th Army, which in part were stationed on the ships and in part advanced along the shorelines of the Sungari, covered over nine hundred kilometers along the Amur and Sungari rivers.⁵⁰

Supplying one and a half million advancing troops was quite a formidable task. "The restoring of railroads, with the changing of the gauge to the Soviet standard, was done on the 1st Far Eastern Front at an average rate of seventy-one kilometers per day. This was achieved through the innovativeness of the railroad workers. They were included in the air assault troops and frontline units, so they were able to take over railroad connections and immediately organize the local population to repair the tracks and change the gauges."⁵¹

Officially, the Soviet military campaign in the Far East lasted twenty-four days, but battles only took place for twelve days. Not even two weeks had passed before a massive surrender of the Japanese troops began. Japanese losses numbered 84,000 killed and 594,000 taken prisoner. Among the prisoners were 148 Japanese generals. Unbelievable trophies were captured.

The results of the operation were enviable. The United States had fought against Japan for almost four years, and what did it receive? The Soviet Union fought against Japan for twelve days, and all of China, North Korea, and North Vietnam fell under the Soviet Union's control. Vasilevsky happily reported:

By delivering a crushing blow to the Japanese troops in Korea, the Soviet Army created favorable conditions for the activities of revolutionaries. . . . In the northern section of the country, workers led by Communists began to build the first truly independent, demo-

cratic nation in Korean history. . . . As a result of Japan's defeat, favorable conditions were created in China, North Korea, and North Vietnam for the victory of people's revolutions. . . . The Chinese People's Army of Liberation received huge reserves of trophy arms, military equipment, and supplies. . . . The defeat of Japanese militarism opened the way for national liberation movements throughout Asia. On September 2, when the Japanese foreign affairs minister Sigemitsu and Chief of Staff Umedzu signed the pact of total capitulation, President Ho Chi Minh declared the birth of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. On October 12, the Laos patriots pronounced the birth of Phatet-Lao.⁵²

For many years, Soviet officers have been taught the lightning war of 1945 as an example. That was how one must fight: in two weeks, hundreds of millions of people were under Soviet control. One should be amazed by the assault of the 6th Tank Guards Army, the thrust of the Amur flotilla up the Sungari River, the bold actions of the paratroops. The most amazing was the coordination among the troops. Tankers, pilots, artillerymen, sailors, communications men, paratroops, railroad workers, sappers, and the High Command staff in the Far East, the administrations and staffs of the three fronts and one fleet, eighteen armies and one flotilla, tens of corps, divisions, and brigades, hundreds of regiments and thousands of battalions, performed like one symphony orchestra under the direction of the great maestro Vasilevsky.

I reread many times Marshal Vasilevsky's biography, his book, and his articles, before I stumbled across a sentence that made me pause for breath: "Since May 1940, the deputy head of the Operations Directorate of the General Staff worked on the operational part of a plan of strategic deployment of Soviet armed forces in the northern, northwestern, and western directions."⁵³ In other words, between May 1940 and June 1941—that is, for more than a year—Major General Vasilevsky worked on preparing a plan for war against Germany. He personally prepared war plans for the Northern, Northwestern, and Western Fronts—in other words, for the Soviet troops in the Karelian, Baltic, and Byelorussian regions. These regions were precisely where the Soviet troops were hit the hardest in the summer of 1941. The troops of the Northern Front let the Finnish troops from the north through to Leningrad, and the worst blockade in human history ensued. The formations of the Northwestern Front fell apart, letting German troops through to Leningrad from the south. The troops of the Western Front in Byelorussia were almost instantly surrounded and crushed, leaving the way to Moscow wide open.

Stalin didn't criticize or punish Vasilevsky for such planning. On the contrary, a month after an unprecedented catastrophe for the Red Army, Stalin appointed Vasilevsky to the position of head of the Operations Directorate of the General Staff, entrusting him with drafting all plans on all fronts and in all directions. Vasilevsky walked the path from Major General to Marshal of the Soviet Union faster than anyone else—in just one and a half years. Stalin entrusted him personally with planning the defeat of German troops near Stalingrad, the victory at Kursk, the brilliant operation in Byelorussia, and then the war against Japan.

The selection of other high commanders for the task of the lightning defeat of Japanese troops in 1945 was also surprising. In June 1941, Lieutenant Colonel S. P. Ivanov was the chief of the operations division of the 13th Army headquarters on the Western Front. The significant part of the 13th Army was surrounded and perished on the sixth week of the war with Germany. Ivanov miraculously stayed alive and climbed the peaks of military power. He

was first appointed chief of staff of the 38th Army, then chief of staff of the 1st Tank Army, and then of the 1st Guards Army. He successfully fulfilled all these roles. He planned the army operations in the most strategically important locations. In 1942, he became chief of staff of the Southwestern Front, which included the Stalingrad region. Here once again he performed brilliantly. S. P. Ivanov directed a number of staffs on various fronts, and always in the most important locations of the war. In the summer of 1945, he was already a colonel general. Stalin appointed him to be chief of staff of the High Command of Soviet troops in the Far East. Marshal Vasilevsky was the high commander and S. P. Ivanov was the head of the brain center. The lightning-speed defeat of Japanese troops was not only Vasilevsky's accomplishment, but also Ivanov's. S. P. Ivanov was a brilliant staff officer. He never made any mistakes in planning. On the contrary, his plans were examples to be followed by staff officers for many generations. How could it be that in 1941 everything in his plans was completely incorrect?

Until February 1941, General K. A. Meretskov was the chief of general staff of the Red Army. He was personally responsible for all war plans. From February until June 1941, the plans could not have radically changed. Consequently, Meretskov carried the responsibility for the defeat of the Red Army by the Germans in June 1941. But in 1945 Meretskov carried the title of Marshal of the Soviet Union. Stalin entrusted him with the command of the 1st Far Eastern Front.

Lieutenant General M. A. Purkaev in 1941 was the chief of staff of the Kiev special military district, the most powerful of Soviet districts. The district was transformed into the Southwestern Front, which was surrounded and decimated east of Kiev. In 1945, Stalin entrusted General Purkaev with the command of the 2nd Far Eastern Front.

In 1941, Major General R. Ya. Malinovsky commanded the 48th Rifle Corps. The corps was stationed on the Romanian border where there were no German troops. It was preparing for invasion, but it had to retreat. In 1945, Malinovsky was a Marshal of the Soviet Union. Stalin trusted him with the most powerful Trans-Baikal Front and once again placed him where the enemy was most vulnerable.

Generally, Stalin entrusted all the men who had planned the war against Germany with planning and conducting the war against Japan.

I have been taught to search for rules in the actions of enemy troop leaders, to note all moments that repeat themselves. If a general has a propensity to use the same maneuver several times, his conduct in the future can be predicted and his plans can be resisted. I used this method to analyze the battle habits of Soviet generals. I discovered that they had constantly repeated the same preparations: before carrying out the surprise attack against the Japanese 6th Army at Khalkhin-Gol in 1939; before invading Finland in 1939; before the operation to take Bessarabia in 1940; before sending Soviet troops into Iran in August 1941. They did it in all the aggressive operations of World War II, and, finally, before the sudden defeat of Japanese troops in August 1945. In the summer of 1941, they followed the same program.

Understandably, Japanese intelligence was unable to determine the true scope of the Soviet troop transfer, the date of the beginning of the invasion, or the locations chosen for the primary attacks. But still, it saw something, and in the Japanese staffs it was understood that such a troop transfer meant that sooner or later the Red Army would attack. The Japanese had only one way out: to carry out a preemptive strike against the Soviet troops. If the Japanese

army had carried out an attack, the disaster of June 1941 would have been repeated in the Far East at the end of July or the beginning of August 1945.

Thousands of Soviet tanks without crews, as well as thousands of airplanes without pilots in the fields, were left right on the borders. The border forests were full of piles of shells, the railroad stations with trains of fuel and ammunition. If the Japanese had attacked, they would have seized all these resources, while the Red Army would have been left without ammunition or fuel. Thousands of soldiers from the railroad troops were ready to change the Japanese tracks to the Soviet standards, but they were not prepared to blow up their own bridges and tunnels. If they had attacked, the Japanese armies could have used Soviet bridges and tunnels. Soviet artillery had advanced right up to the border, but was not protected by infantry. For the purpose of surprise, the tanks and infantry would advance to the border only at the very last moment. If they had attacked, the Japanese could have taken thousands of Soviet cannon and howitzers, millions of shells which were already piled on the ground, and the Red Army would have been left without artillery, just like in 1941. The Red Army's command posts and communication lines were also located right at the borders. In the event of a surprise Japanese attack, the Red Army would have been left without command or communication—in other words, without a head or a nervous system.

On Stalin's orders, the command and staff of the Karelian Front, with Marshal Meretskov in command, was transferred to the Far East. The choice fell on them because the Karelian Front had tremendous experience in breaking through long-term fortified regions. This was exactly the work they were to do in Manchuria. The 5th Army, transferred from Eastern Prussia, was chosen for the same reason. This army also had rich experience in breaking through fortifications. At the same time, Soviet troops designated for the defense of fortified regions left their concrete fortifications and prepared to cross the border. The situation was extremely favorable for a Japanese invasion: the Red Army was preparing for attack, but it was not preparing for defense. It left all its fortified regions without troops. Hundreds of thousands of Red Army soldiers and officers were in trains, not knowing where they were being taken and what they were supposed to do.

Arriving Soviet troops were formed into tight assault formations, which made great targets for the Japanese air force. The bare areas between the attack formations were two hundred kilometers or more. The Japanese would not even have to breach Soviet defenses in these locations, because there were none there. Most importantly, the Soviet troops had no plans for defense in the Far East in the summer of 1945. Invasion plans were relayed to the troops at the very last moment. If the Japanese troops had carried out a surprise attack before August 9, 1945, Soviet troops would have suffered almost the same losses as Soviet troops in the summer of 1941 on the German border. And we would now be laughing at the stupidity of Soviet marshals, who ordered soldiers to harvest the hay in the fortified regions and sent officers to rest homes and sanatoriums. But the Japanese did not attack, since they never planned to attack the USSR, at least not in 1945.

Conclusion

The Aggressor

We will bury you!

—NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV, AT A RECEPTION FOR FOREIGN AMBASSADORS
AND JOURNALISTS IN THE KREMLIN, NOVEMBER 1956

The Soviet Union entered World War II as an aggressor. Poland, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania—all the western neighbors of the Soviet Union—fell victim to the Red Army. During talks in Berlin, Stalin's envoy Molotov demanded strongholds in Yugoslavia, in the Adriatic Sea, in Greece, in the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, in the Persian Gulf; he demanded that countries south of the Baku-Batumi line, in the direction of the Persian Gulf, be given over to Soviet control, including eastern Turkey, northern Iran, and Iraq. He also declared the Soviet Union's interest in southern Bukovina.¹ Molotov constantly asked Hitler and Ribbentrop whether Germany had reconsidered its position on the fate of Finland, seeing that the Soviet Union was not going to let that country be independent. Finally, Stalin's major demand at the Berlin talks in November 1940 was for Germany to acquiesce to a Soviet military presence in Bulgaria. Molotov added, in a conversation with Hitler, that "the USSR was ready to support Bulgaria in its desire for an outlet to the Aegean Sea, and considered said desire to be just."² Stalin never specified which countries his puppet Bulgaria would have to invade to reach this outlet—Greece, Turkey, or both. In reality, the Germans took Greece and gave the go-ahead for Bulgaria to annex a part of the Greek territory—western Thrace and eastern Macedonia, thus reaching the Aegean Sea. But it was Stalin who wanted to give this go-ahead.

The Soviet Union finished World War II as an aggressor as well. It was the only country that expanded its borders as a result of World War II. Stalin annexed Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, northern Bukovina, western Ukraine, and western Byelorussia, as well as parts of eastern Prussia with Königsberg, Trans-Carpathian Ukraine, the Kuril Islands, South Sakhalin, and Bessarabia.³ Under the banner of the "great patriotic war," Stalin punished entire peoples and nations. On Stalin's orders, all the Chechens, Ingushes, Crimean Tatars, Volga Germans, and

other peoples were transported to empty frozen fields or waterless, lifeless steppes, and abandoned there to die. It is interesting to note that the Kalmyks, who already lived on the steppes, were not relocated further into their depths but into the Siberian taiga. Stalin controlled the fates of entire peoples, not only on the territory of the Soviet Union but also in nearby countries. Stalin relocated millions of Germans from Prussia, Silesia, and Sudet.

When the Nazi leaders went on trial in Nuremberg, Hitler's concentration camps in Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, Mulberg, Furstenwalde, Liebe-Roze, Bautzen, and others were not shut down. These concentration camps were simply taken out of the SS system and incorporated into the system of the GULAG. Thus, for example, the Nazi concentration camp at Buchenwald was transformed into "Special camp #2," which remained operational until 1950. Of the 28,000 people imprisoned there in those five years, seven thousand (25 percent) died. In comparison, from 1937 to 1945, 250,000 people went through the Nazi Buchenwald. Of that number, 50,000 (20 percent) died. The Communist Buchenwald had a higher death rate.

The Red Army came to Central Europe with the supposedly noble goal of liberating it from the Nazis, but it left only after establishing puppet governments in most of those countries. Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, part of Austria, and Albania were forced under Stalin's control, as well as China, North Korea, and Vietnam in Asia. On July 22, 1945, the Soviet delegation suggested that the Soviet Union, the United States, and Great Britain separately or jointly oversee the former Italian colonies in Africa and the Mediterranean.⁴ On July 23, Stalin demanded the right to create Soviet military naval bases in the Black Sea region, in the straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles.⁵ He also wanted parts of Turkey—the Kars and Ardagan regions—to belong to the Soviet Union.⁶ Stalin tried to take control of West Berlin by strangling it through a blockade. Soviet agents appeared in France, Italy, and Greece. The NATO military alliance was formed with the clear goal of preventing Stalin's troops from occupying Greece and Turkey. Stalin declared northern Iran to be a part of Azerbaijan, and right until the end of his life never gave up trying to take control of this province. Stalin set up the People's Democratic Republic of Southern Azerbaijan, and the Kurdish People's Democratic Republic, respectively in northern and western Iran.

In 1945, tens of millions of square kilometers of territory, occupied by millions of people, lay at Stalin's feet. But Stalin at that time did not have the resources to control all his conquests. On June 22, 1941, Hitler dealt a lethal blow to the Soviet Union. The best part of the male population of the Soviet Union perished in the war against Germany. After the war, the USSR was supposed to have conducted a population census and calculated its war losses. But Stalin did not conduct a census. It was only conducted fourteen years after the war, when Stalin was dead. "The decision not to count all the citizens until 1959 was founded on a desire not to draw attention to the huge unjustified human losses during the war period."⁷

During the last year of the war, the Red Army had to recruit underage boys, without saying how many years they would have to serve. They were kept in the army for seven to eight years. Otherwise, there would have been nobody left to serve in the gigantic army, which controlled almost half the globe. Those seven to eight years lasted until Stalin's death. If he had lived longer, these soldiers would have been kept in the army for fifteen years, or even more.

World War II opened unlimited opportunities for Stalin to spread Communism throughout the world, but there was nobody left in the Soviet Union to reap the crops in the fields. Famine broke out in the country in 1946 and 1947. One soldier was quoted as saying: "In this awful regiment, we were awfully hungry. Our rations were very small, plus they somehow managed to rob us."⁸ The army, which the government was supposed to feed, starved. The people, whom the government was under no obligation to feed, starved as well. The famine of 1946 and 1947 claimed the lives of about a million people. Stalin had sentenced Europe to death, but he could not carry out the execution.

Hitler, according to Stalin's plans, was supposed to crush Europe, and then Stalin, with a surprise attack, would "liberate" it from Hitler. In the name of that goal, German tankers and pilots were trained in the Soviet Union, and Stalin brought Hitler to power. But Hitler ruined Stalin's plan.

Some people did not even notice that the Soviet Union lost World War II. Where was Stalin's great victorious country? The Soviet Union was created for war and conquest. It was not adapted for peacetime. It could either spread over the entire planet and kill off all normal life, or die. Stalin did not succeed in taking over the world, and this meant another war or the end of the Soviet Union in the near future. The Soviet Union was preparing itself for a new war, World War III. It concentrated all its strength and resources in preparing for a new war, and it was crushed in 1991 by the burden of its military expenditures.

Epilogue

Stalin Was a War Criminal

Stalin was a war criminal who should have been tried at Nuremberg in 1946 along with the German deputy Fuehrer, Rudolf Hess—so argued Hess’s defense lawyer, Dr. Alfred Seidl, who opened the defense for Hess on March 22, 1946. Through a secret protocol, Hitler and Stalin had conspired to divide up between them countries conquered by their armies. Hitler was dead, but Stalin, according to the mandate of the Allied Military Tribunal, should have been indicted. The charges against him should have been similar to those against Hess, said Hess’s lawyer.

Hess was charged with:

1. Conspiracy to wage aggressive war
2. Crimes against peace
3. War crimes
4. Crimes against humanity.

Since Hess had flown to England in May of 1941, and had been taken prisoner by the British a month before Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, Dr. Seidl was confident he could gain an acquittal on the charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Since Hess was in captivity in England he could have had no part in the atrocities against the Jews. The first two charges would be more difficult to refute since Hess, as Hitler’s deputy, had discussed with the Fuehrer the events that led to war, and until May 1941 Hess had agreed with all of Hitler’s decisions.

In *Hess: The Man and His Mission* (London: David Bruce and Watson, 1970), the Czech-born journalist, diplomat, and writer J. Bernard Hutton described how Dr. Seidl learned of the secret protocol to the Hitler-Stalin pact signed by Soviet foreign minister Vacheslav Molotov and German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, which implicated Stalin in war crimes. After a long and frustrating interview with Hess, who insisted he did not want to defend himself with a lawyer, Dr. Seidl was preparing to leave the prison. In the

prison yard he overheard *Reichsmarschall* Hermann Goering and Von Ribbentrop talking. Von Ribbentrop offered an astonishing piece of information to Goering. He said that when he visited Moscow in August 1939 to arrange the German-Soviet treaty with Molotov, he had also signed a secret treaty which was not made public. Von Ribbentrop told Goering: "This secret agreement defined spheres of interest in the event of any war."

The two foreign ministers had drawn a line upon a map along the Vistula and the Bug, the two rivers that divide Poland. They had agreed that, should war come, the territory to the west of the two rivers should become a German sphere of interest, and the territory to the east would be under Soviet control. The Soviet sphere included Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the eastern part of Poland, and certain areas of Romania. Von Ribbentrop also told Goering that the Russians had assured him, since his arrest, that it would be made easier for him if he did not talk about this secret agreement in court. Stalin clearly wanted to keep his secret pact with Hitler—to carve up and share Poland and the Baltic states—from being made public at a time when the Russians were part of an international military court passing sentence on war crimes that included conspiracy to wage aggressive war and crimes against peace.

Dr. Seidl realized at once the significance of this secret pact to his client. After the military action of Germany and the Soviet Union against Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in June 1940, both Germany and the Soviet Union had denied that any political agreement existed, apart from the German-Soviet treaty concerning boundaries, which was concluded on August 23, 1939. It followed that if Dr. Seidl could prove such a secret plan did exist then Stalin and the Soviet Union were as guilty of waging aggressive war as any of the Nazis in the dock. Dr. Seidl would be able to argue that his client should be found not guilty or else Stalin and other Kremlin men should join him in the dock, explained Hutton.

Dr. Seidl set out to find another witness to the secret protocol signing besides Von Ribbentrop. After a difficult search he managed to come across Dr. Friedrich Gaus, who had been undersecretary of state in the German foreign ministry and had accompanied Von Ribbentrop to Moscow for the treaty signing. "Was there such a secret agreement?" Dr. Seidl asked. "Yes," confirmed Dr. Gaus, "I remember it clearly." When asked where a copy could be found, Gaus said he had no idea since to his knowledge all the important files of the German foreign ministry had been microfilmed and surrendered to American officials.

Dr. Seidl needed documentary evidence to make his case. When his efforts to find the document by going through normal bureaucratic channels failed, he spread the word of his search to all the high-ranking American officers he met socially and told them about the specific document he was looking for.

One evening as he was leaving the court, an American officer, whom he did not know, approached him and asked in German, "Are you Dr. Alfred Seidl?" The lawyer nodded. As Hutton wrote, "The American introduced himself. He then handed Dr. Seidl a plain sealed envelope. 'This is something that may interest you,' he said. Dr. Seidl ripped open the envelope, his fingers trembling as he leafed through the contents. It was a copy of the agreement between Molotov and von Ribbentrop that he was searching for. The American officer discreetly disappeared."

After studying the document Dr. Seidl saw that it was not a photostatic copy and had no official seal. He gave the document to Dr. Gaus, who said it seemed to him to be a true

copy of the secret agreement reached between Molotov and von Ribbentrop. Dr. Gaus willingly signed an affidavit:

About noon on August 23, 1939, the plane in which I was traveling with von Ribbentrop landed in Moscow. I was acting as his legal advisor in regard to certain negotiations between [him] and Stalin. I was not present but there was a counselor from the embassy and Hilger, who acted as interpreter. Also present was Ambassador Count Schulenburg.

The outcome seemed to be satisfactory to Von Ribbentrop, who expressed the opinion that Germany would be successful in her proposals.

In the evening a second discussion took place for the purpose of completing and signing the necessary documents. I had prepared the draft for Herr von Ribbentrop. Ambassador Count Schulenburg and the counselor from the embassy and Hilger were also there. Stalin and Molotov carried on the negotiations for the Russian side assisted by Pavlov, who interpreted.

An agreement was reached regarding the non-aggression pact between Germany and Soviet Russia, but a phrase regarding the friendly shaping of German-Russian relations was objected to by Stalin, who said that the Soviet government could not suddenly publicize a German-Russian friendship after the National Socialist foreign minister had poured "buckets of putrid ditch water" over them for six years. It was necessary for it to be reworded.

Beside the non-aggression pact there were negotiations at some length about a special secret document which in my recollection was called "secret protocol" or "secret additional protocol." This [was] aimed at the delimitation of the mutual spheres of influence in the European territories situated between the two countries. I cannot remember whether the expression "spheres of influence" was used or not. In the document Germany said she was disinterested in Latvia, Estonia, and Finland, but regarded Lithuania as a part of "her sphere of influence." At the same time, Germany wanted to have an interest, but not political, in the Baltic ports which were free from ice. This, of course, was not acceptable to the Russians. Obviously, von Ribbentrop was acting on instructions, as he had booked a telephone call to Hitler, which came through at this time. He was told to accept the Soviet point of view.

For the Polish territory, a demarcation line was fixed. Whether it was marked exactly on a map or described in words in the document I cannot remember. The agreement reached about Poland was to the effect that both powers should settle all questions regarding that country at a final meeting. Regarding the Balkans, it was established that Germany should have only economic interests.

The non-aggression pact and the secret documents were signed at a rather late hour of the same night.

Approximately one month later, at discussions about the second German-Soviet political treaty, the document mentioned above was altered—following a suggestion communicated by the Soviet government to Berlin earlier—to the effect that Lithuania was to be taken out of the "German sphere of interest," except for a "Lappet" [an overhanging piece of land] adjacent to East Prussia. In return, however, the demarcation line in Poland was moved further to the east.

At subsequent negotiations, through diplomatic channels, either at the end of 1940 or the beginning of 1941, this diplomatic "Lappet" was given up by the Germans.

The document not only exposed Stalin and Hitler's political goals, but it was staggering evidence of their willingness to wage war and to share the spoils of war between themselves by dismembering smaller countries.

Dr. Seidl had no illusions as to why he had been given access to the document by an American officer who feared Stalin's intentions in Eastern Europe and a Cold War in Western Europe through the rise of Communist parties in France and Italy. But he was ready to carry out his duty to his client, who sat in the dock reading a novel, appearing to have not the slightest bit of interest in the proceedings.

On March 30, 1946, Dr. Seidl produced his astonishing surprise when he cross-examined Von Ribbentrop about the secret German-Soviet agreement in 1939. Reluctantly, Von Ribbentrop admitted it existed. "If war broke out, occupation of these zones was to be undertaken by Germany and Russia. At that time, I heard expressions—both from Stalin and Hitler—that Polish and other territories thus delineated were regions which both sides had lost in an unfortunate war."

The shocked judges ordered Dr. Seidl to halt his cross-examination. He desisted, but told the court that the secret pact was an essential element in his defense of Hess and if the court did not allow the full details of the secret German-Soviet agreements to be called into evidence he would demand that Molotov, the Soviet foreign minister, be called as a witness. At least one of the prosecuting nations had been involved in the conspiracy that led to World War II, Dr. Seidl charged.

The Soviet prosecutor, General Roman Rudenko, jumped to his feet to protest and urged that the document be suppressed. "The court is investigating the case of the major German criminals. It is not investigating the foreign policy of the allies. This anonymous document . . . can have no value."

The judges conferred and upheld Rudenko's objection to the document being entered as evidence, but decided that Baron von Weizsäcker, a former secretary of state in the German foreign ministry, could be questioned about it. His testimony confirmed the existence of a secret pact and created a sensation when he told the court:

The secret protocol, of extensive scope, drew a line of demarcation between areas which in certain circumstances would be of interest to the Soviet Union, and those which would belong to the German sphere of interest. In the Soviet sphere were included Finland, Estonia, Latvia, the eastern parts of Poland, and certain parts of Romania. Everything west of that line was left to Germany. Later, in September or October 1939, amendments were agreed upon by which Lithuania, or the greater part of it, was transferred to the Soviet sphere, and the line of demarcation in Poland was moved considerably to the west. Explicitly, or implicitly, the secret agreement was to create a completely new order in Poland. And when it came into operation, this line of demarcation was followed closely.

When the British Lord Justice Lawrence asked Baron von Weizsäcker if he knew whether the secret pact existed in writing, the former foreign office official replied: "I kept a photostatic copy of that pact in my safe and I will have no hesitation in recognizing it if it were put to me." Before Dr. Seidl could present his document to Von Weizsäcker its authenticity was challenged, and Dr. Seidl could only reply that it had been given to him by an unidentified

allied army officer. The judges conferred again and ruled that since the origin of the document in the courtroom was unknown, it could not be put before the witness.

Dr. Seidl's efforts bore bitter fruit. He had revealed to the world that a heinous secret pact existed, but the ruling to prevent him from producing the actual document in court prevented him from aiding the defense of his client. Rudolf Hess was not found guilty of crimes against humanity and war crimes, but he was found guilty of conspiracy to wage aggressive war and of crimes against peace. He was sentenced to life imprisonment on October 1, 1946. The Soviet member of the tribunal objected to Hess's sentence, arguing that Hess should have been sentenced to death. Hess spent the rest of his life in prison until he died by suicide at age ninety-two, on August 17, 1987, the last of the convicted Nazi war criminals and the sole occupant of West Berlin's Spandau prison. The Soviet Union rejected all efforts to permit Hess early release.

Had Hess been released, his family and those who urged his release would have been free to draw attention to Stalin's own guilt for crimes against peace and conspiracy to wage aggressive war.

Abbreviations

ACP(b):	All-Union Communist Party (bolsheviks)
CC of RCP(b):	Central Committee of Russian Communist Party (bolsheviks)
CPSU:	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
GRU:	Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces
GULAG:	Chief Administration of Collective Labor Camps
NEP:	New Economic Policy
NKVD:	People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs
NSDAP:	National Socialist Workers' Party (Germany)
OKH:	Army High Command (Germany)
OKW:	Supreme Command of the Armed Forces (Germany)

Notes

Author's Note:

Readers may notice that several sources are quoted without full details (city, publisher, page number). My friends and anonymous supporters often send me photocopies of documents without these details. As I live in hiding in the U.K. (the Soviets sentenced me to death for defecting to the West in 1978), getting the original source data is often very difficult. But I do not doubt the veracity of my sources: for the last twenty years my sources have never been challenged by critics, even those who disagree with my conclusions. However, readers who feel that missing source details are absolutely necessary are invited to e-mail their requests to info@suvorov.com. My friends and I will do our best to oblige.

Preface

1. GULAG —*Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerei* (Main Directorate of Correctional Labor Camps, Labor Settlements and Places of Incarceration), one of the names for the Soviet prison system. It became part of the NKVD—*Narodnyi Commissariat Vnutrennikh Del* (*People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs*) from 1930, and then became a part of the MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) in 1956.

Introduction

1. This name has been used since 1942. Other names were used before, but in this book, only GRU is used.
2. *Soviet Military Encyclopedia* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1976), 5:67.

Chapter I

Epigraph: Lev Davydovich Trotsky, speech during seizure of power, third speech at the Second All-Russian Conference of Soviets, October 26, 1917.

1. Out of an agreed-upon 245 tons of gold, 92 were delivered to Germany, but confiscated from it by victorious France.

Chapter 2

Epigraph: *Zhizn Natsional'nostei*, no. 6 (1918).

1. Vladimir I. Lenin, *Complete Collected Works*, 5th ed. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1977), 41:353.
2. *Ibid.*
3. V. Ivanov, "Requiem on Victorious Steel Drums, in *Ural*, nos. 2–3 (1994): 242; N. Kakurin and B. Melikov, *Civil War in Russia: War with the White Poles* (Moscow: St. Petersburg, 2002), 670.
4. Kakurin and Melikov, *Civil War in Russia*, 556.
5. *The Comintern and the Idea of the World Revolution: Documents* (Moscow: Nauka, 1998), 186.

6. L. O. Frossard, *De Jaurès à Lénine: notes et souvenirs d'un militant* (Paris: Bibliothèque de documentation sociale, 1930), 137.
7. *Documents and Materials on the History of Soviet-Polish Relations* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1964), 3: 221.
8. Kakurin and Melikov, *Civil War in Russia*, 434.
9. Vladimir I. Lenin, Ninth Conference of the Russian Communist Party, September 22, 1920.

Chapter 3

Epigraph: Joseph Stalin, “About the Polish Communist Party” (1926), republished in *Collected Works in 13 Volumes* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1952), 6: 267.

1. Vladimir I. Lenin, “Report on Foreign and Domestic Policy,” delivered at the Eighth Congress of Soviets on December 22, 1920, published in *Complete Collected Works*, 143.
2. Lenin, *Complete Collected Works*, 358.
3. Walter Krivitsky, *I Was an Agent of Stalin* (Moscow: Terra, 1991), 97–98.
4. Ibid.
5. Alexander Kolpakidi and Dmitri Prokhorov, *Empire of the GRU: Sketches on the History of Russian Military Intelligence* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2000), 1: 105–7.
6. *Rodina*, no. 10 (1990): 13.
7. “Politburo of the CC of RCP (b)—ACP (b) [Central Committee of Russian Communist Party (bolsheviks) —All-Union Communist Party (bolsheviks)] and Europe: Decisions of the ‘Special Folder,’ 1929–1939,” in *The Russian Political Encyclopedia* (Moscow, 2001), 21.
8. Ibid., 22–23, and Boris Bazhanov, *Memoirs of a Former Secretary of Stalin* (Paris: The Third Wave, 1980), 68–69. The most important fact is that Bazhanov summarized decisions, made in secret by the Politburo, with absolute certainty. His only mistake is with regard to the date: that session of the Politburo convened on October 4, 1923, not in September of the same year. In 2001 this decision, already unclassified, was made public. The abovementioned session of the Politburo really did consider the question of a specified date for armed insurrection in Germany. A small segment from protocol #38, made on October 4, 1923: “Determined: . . . 3. To agree with the commission with regards to the fixing of the deadline—the 9th of November, this year. 4. To apply all political and organizational efforts so that the appointed deadline may be met. 5. . . . It is to be remembered, that the course of action may lead to the inevitability of ordering the decisive advance ahead of the appointed deadline. . . . 7. To send to Germany comrades Pyatakov, Rudzutak, and Kuibyshev. . . . 11. To let those four [Central Committee members Radek, Pyatakov, Unshlikht, and Vasia Shmidt, NarKom of Labor] decide, upon arrival in Berlin, whether to include comrade Krestinskyi in their work, and, in case of being required to act in a conspiratorial manner, to have comrade Krestinskyi aid the group’s activities, allowing him equal voting power in all or some of their meetings. . . . 13. To increase the special fund by 500,000 gold rubles.” The decision to include Rudzutak among the four was not carried out due to the latter’s illness; instead of Kuibyshev, according to the Politburo decision on October 18, the People’s Commissar for Labor, V. V. Schmidt, joined its ranks. Nikolai Krestinskyi was then a plenipotentiary representative of the USSR in Germany. The sum mentioned here is for the deposition of the German government.
9. General Ioakim Vatsetis (1873–1938) was Commander in Chief of Soviet Russia’s armed forces in 1918–19.
10. Vyacheslav Menzhinskii (1874–1934) was one of the leaders of Stalin’s political police.
11. Meer Trillisser (1883–1940) was one of the heads of political police in the USSR.
12. Genrikh Yagoda (1891–1938) was one of the leaders of Stalin’s political police.
13. Gustav Stresemann (1879–1929) was *Reichchancellor* of Germany from 1923, and German minister of foreign affairs from 1923 to 1929.
14. Raymond Poincaré (1860–1934) was premier and minister of foreign affairs in France from 1912, president from 1913 to 1920, and premier once again from 1922 to 1924 and 1926 to 1929.
15. Krivitsky, *I Was an Agent of Stalin*, 49–50.
16. Speech on August 1, 1927, at joint plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the Communist Party, quoted in Joseph Stalin, *Collected Works*, 10: 63.
17. Gustav Hilger and Alfred G. Meyer, *Incompatible Allies* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), 267.
18. Krivitsky, *I Was an Agent of Stalin* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1996), 49–50.

19. Ernst Roehm (d. 1934) was one of the leading figures of the Nazi movement, second only to Hitler himself.

Chapter 4

Epigraph: Adolf Hitler, during a meeting with Lord Halifax, the British foreign minister, November 19, 1937.

Chapter 5

Epigraph: Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Russia: T-OKO, 1992), 524.

1. *Voenno-istoricheskii Zhurnal (VIZh)* [Military History Journal], no. 4 (1989): 53.
2. *Bulleten Oppozitsii* [Bulletin of Opposition], no. 52–53 (October 1936): 42.
3. Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror*, translated from English into Russian (Florence, Italy: Aurora, 1974).
4. A. Antonov-Ovseenko, *Portrait of a Tyrant* (New York: Khronika, 1980), 296.
5. Joseph Stalin, in *Eighth Congress of the Communist Party: Protocols* (Moscow: Partizdat, 1959), 20.
6. Lenin, *Complete Collected Works*, 41: 353.
7. Hitler, Adolf, *Mein Kampf*, pt. 2, chap. XIII, passim.
8. Rosenberg, Alfred, *Der Zukunftsweg einer deutschen Aussenpolitik*, 20.

Chapter 6

Epigraph: Leon Trotsky, “Against National Communism!” *Bulleten Oppozitsii* [Bulletin of Opposition], no. 24 (August 25, 1931).

1. M. I. Meltiukhov, *Stalin’s Missed Opportunity: The Soviet Union and the Fight for Europe, 1939–1941* (Moscow: Veche, 2002), 511. As of January 1, 1928, the Red Army had forty-five Ricardo Mk V tanks, six Taylor Mk A tanks, and twenty-eight Renault FT-17 tanks, altogether seventy-nine foreign-made tanks. Mikhail Svirin and Andrei Beskurnikov, “First Soviet Tanks,” supplement to *M-Hobby* magazine (Moscow), no. 1 (1995): 43. The domestic production of tanks was launched in the 1928–29 business year. One hundred and twenty-two tanks were produced then: 121 MS-1 (T-18) tanks and one T-12. But only 96 MS-1s were accepted by the state acceptance commission. In 1932, 3,039 tanks and light tanks had already been produced. Overall, in the years of the first Five Year Plan, 3,949 tanks and light tanks were produced altogether. *History of the Second World War, 1939–1945* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1973–82), 1: 260. By January 1, 1933, the Red Army had 4,538 tanks. Meltiukhov, *Stalin’s Missed Opportunity*, 515.
2. V. S. Shumikhin, *Soviet Military Aviation, 1917–1941* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), 157.
3. Jacques Rossi, *GULAG Directory* (London: OPI, 1987), 96–97.
4. *GULAG: The Main [Prison] Camp Directorate, 1918–1960: Collection of Documents*, compiled by A. I. Kokurin and M. Petrov (Moscow: International Fund “Democracy,” 2000), 753.
5. S. G. Popova, “The World Gold Market and Issues of Gold Export Development in Russia,” Ph.D. thesis (Moscow: 1998).
6. V. Z. Rogovin, “Hunger,” in *The Power and the Opposition, 1928–1933* (Moscow: Zhurnal Teatr, 1993), chap. XLVIII.
7. *Pravda*, February 2, 1935.
8. Felix Chuev, *Molotov: Master of Half a Domain* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2002), 458.
9. V. Z. Rogovin, “Hunger,” in *The Power and the Opposition, 1928–1933*. Less than 100,000 tons of grain were exported in 1928, but by 1929 that figure had already reached 1.3 million tons; in 1930 it was 4.8 million tons, in 1931 it was 5.2 million tons, in 1932 it was 1.8 million tons, and in 1933 it was 1 million tons.

Chapter 7

Epigraph: G. Zinoviev, member of the Politburo, chairman of the Communist International, in *Collected Works* (Leningrad, 1925), 7: 490.

1. *Pravda*, no. 255, November 6–7, 1927.
2. Stalin, *Collected Works*, 11: 202.

3. Joseph Stalin, speech at the plenary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, August 1, 1927, published for the first time only twenty-five years later in *Collected Works*, 10: 49.
4. Stalin, *Collected Works*, 7: 72.
5. Stalin, *Collected Works*, 7: 14. This quote is taken from Stalin's speech at the January 1925 plenary of the Central Committee, which discussed, among other things, an increase in military expenditures.
6. Quoted in Joachim Fest, *Hitler: A Biography* (Perm, Russia: Alteya, 1993), 2: 234.
7. Henry Piker, *Hitler's Table Talks* (Smolensk, Russia: Rusich, 1998), entry from May 6, 1942.
8. Stalin, *Collected Works*, 11: 202.

Chapter 8

Epigraph: Alexander Lapchinsky, *The Air Army* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1939), 144.

1. P. Stefanovsky, *Three Hundred Unknowns* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968), 83.
2. Shumikhin, *Soviet Military Aviation*, 218.
3. V. B. Shavrov, *The History of Aircraft Design in the USSR, 1939–1950* (Moscow: Mashinostroyenie, 1988), 162.
4. L. Kerber, *TU: Man and Airplane* (Moscow: Sovetskaya Rossia, 1973), 143.
5. L. Kerber, *TU: Man and Airplane*, article in *Trail in the Sky* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1971), 202.
6. G. J. Taylor, *Combat Aircraft of the World* (London: Ebury Press, 1969), 592.
7. Vaclav Nemecek, *The History of Soviet Aircraft from 1918* (London: Willow Books, 1986), 134.
8. M. Gallay, *Third Dimension* (Moscow: Sovetski Pisatel, 1973), 330.
9. M. Maslov, "Dreadnought" in *M-Hobby* magazine (Moscow), nos. 5–6 (1997): 9, 11. The order to launch serial production of the TB-7 provided for the plans to produce eight lots of TB-7s, for a total of fifty-one aircraft. However, the order was never signed. Kazan Aircraft Factory #142, which was selected to produce the TB-7, had modern equipment, purchased in the United States and delivered to the factory. Actually, the factory had the capacity to produce up to one hundred TB-7s annually. If necessary, other factories could also have been switched to TB-7 production.
10. The TB-7 was completely unreachable until 1940, when the *Luftwaffe* started to receive mass deliveries of the Bf109 E-3.
11. The operational capabilities of the TB-7 bomber were described in an impartial, comprehensive, and detailed manner by Vladimir Ratkin, "PE-8 Testing by War," in the magazine *Mir Aviatsii* [The World of Aviation], nos. 1 and 2 (1996) and no. 1 (1997), as well as by N. Yakubovich, "The PE-8's Unenviable Fate," in the magazine *Krylia Rodiny* [Wings of the Motherland], no. 11 (1995) and no. 1 (1996); also in *USSR Aircraft Industry, 1917–1945* (Moscow: TSAGI Publications Department, 1994), 2: 68–69.
12. G. Ozerov, *Tupolev's Sharaga* (Frankfurt: Possev, 1971), 47.
13. Vladimir Ratkin, *Mir Aviatsii*, no. 1 (1996), 15. Only four aircraft had the fifth additional engine.
14. *Tupolev's Aircraft ANT-1 — ANT-15* (Moscow: Tupolev ANTK, 1995), 16.
15. E. Riabchikov and A. Magid, *The Becoming* (Moscow: Znanie, 1978), 132.
16. Giulio Douhet, Italian general (1869–1930). In 1910 he theorized that heavy bomber aviation would play a decisive role in the next war.
17. Shumikhin, *Soviet Military Aviation*, 185.
18. A. Yakovlev, *Life's Task* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1973), 168.
19. *Ibid.*, 182.

Chapter 9

Epigraph: Robert Goralski, *World War II Almanac, 1931–1945* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1981), 164.

1. *Domestic Armored Vehicles, 1905–1941* (Moscow: Exprint, 2002), 235.
2. *Domestic Armored Vehicles, Twentieth Century*, 121, 127. In April 1938, a prototype of the infantry tank Mark II (A12) Matilda II was built in Britain. In armor thickness, this tank exceeded all other tanks around the world. Its frontal armor was 78 mm, its turret front armor was 75 mm, its side armor was 75 mm, and its aft armor was 55 mm; the T-28 had 30, 20, 20, and 20 mm armor; the T-28E had 50, 80, 40, and 40 mm armor. But the Matilda's weaponry was exceedingly weak: a 40-mm gun and one or two machine guns. There were two engines, 95 horsepower each. Because of the underpowered engines,

this tank—the pride of the British tank industry—could only handle its own weight on level ground or while going down hills. Each armored column of Matildas was escorted by a group of heavy trucks. Their task was to tow each Matilda uphill. The Matilda could only attack the enemy on level ground or roll down at the enemy from the top of a hill. If the reader is interested, I highly recommend the incredible book by D. Fletcher, *The Great Tank Scandal* (London: HMSO, 1990). By the beginning of World War II on September 1, 1939, the British army had only two of those tanks. The tank was slow and had a short range and unsatisfactory open terrain performance and reliability. All of the tank's parameters, with the exception of the armor, did not satisfy battlefield needs.

3. *Encyclopedia of German Tanks of World War Two* (London: AAP, 1978), 89.
4. M. Bariatinsky and M. Pavlov, *Middle Tank T-28* (Moscow: Askold, 1993).
5. A. B. Shirokorad, *The Genius of the Soviet Artillery: The Triumph and Tragedy of V. Grabin* (Moscow: AST, 2002), 141–42.
6. In the summer of 1941, the infantry tank Mark IV (A22) Churchill went into production in Britain. The first production model had the following armor: frontal armor 101 mm, turret frontal armor 89 mm. However, the tank was very weakly armed: a 40-mm gun and two machine guns. The Churchill had a very weak engine and, subsequently, low open-terrain capability and speed. The transmission was unreliable. The tank had an old-fashioned design. The body was assembled on a sub-frame made out of angle beams. Still plates were riveted to the sub-frame, with armor plating attached over them on bolts. Although the armor was very thick, the design lacked rigidity. In the Soviet tanks, the body was a box, welded out of armor plates. This gave the body superb rigidity. This was exactly the method used in the model tanks. Therefore, despite the impressive thickness of the armor, one is looking at a significantly lower technological level in British tank building. Winston Churchill joked that the tank, named after him, had even more shortcomings than he did.
7. Heinz Guderian, *A Soldier's Memoirs* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1957), 231.
8. *Ibid.*, 361.
9. *The Wehrmacht's Fateful Decisions* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), 61.
10. *Ibid.*, 101–2.
11. Heinz Guderian, *Panzer Leader* (London: Futura, 1974), 276.
12. "Second Partial and First Consolidated Report on Russian Medium Tank T-34," Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland (archive, 1943), 4.
13. "Military and Numeric Composition of the Armed Forces of the USSR," *Statistical Almanac*, no.1 (June 22, 1941) (Moscow: Military History Institute, Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, 1994), 241.
14. I. Shmelev, *The Tank's History, 1916–1996* (Moscow: Tekhnika Molodiozhi, 1996), 145.
15. Starting on September 3, 1939, and through May 8, 1945, Britain produced 25,116 tanks; from 1939 to 1945 Germany produced 24,242 tanks and Japan produced 5,085 tanks. Altogether, this came to 54,443 tanks. In the years of World War II, from the beginning of production in September 1940 and up to September 2, 1945, 54,853 T-34 tanks were manufactured.
16. *Encyclopedia of German Tanks of World War Two* (London: AAP, 1978), 261–62.
17. M. Bariatinsky, *Soviet Armor, 1939–1945* (Moscow: Bronecollectsia, 1998), 13–14. Starting in 1940, there were 33,805 T-34 tanks built, and 21,048 T-34-85 tanks were built from 1944 until the end of the war.
18. 2,644 SU-85 were produced and 2,495 SU-100. Altogether: 5,139. *Ibid.*, pp. 22–23.
19. Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, 283.
20. Steven Zaloga and James Grandsen, *Soviet Tanks and Combat Vehicles of World War Two* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1984), 175.
21. V. Chalmaev, *Malysh, ZhZL series* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardia, 1978), 299. Starting in 1942, in the competition for the quality parameters of the tank guns, the German designers achieved outstanding results. The 75-mm gun KwK 42 (with a 70-caliber barrel length!) that was used on a Panther gun was a designer's masterpiece. The 122-mm gun on the IS-2 and the 75-mm Panther gun had approximately the same effectiveness against the armor. The Panther gun's low caliber meant higher speed. The Panther's load was 79 to 81 rounds, but only 28 on the IS-2. This difference was caused by the lower internal volume of the IS-2 versus the "Panther." Also, the 122-mm gun required bigger and heavier

rounds. The German shell's initial velocity was higher than the Soviet one. Combined with excellent sights and optics, this gave it superiority over the IS-2 in precision. The Panther's armor-busting round weighed 6.8 kg and had an initial velocity of 925 m/s. The sub-caliber shell weighed 4.25 kg and had an initial velocity of 1,120 m/s. The armor-penetrating shell of the IS-2 had a lower initial velocity—790 m/s; however, the weight of the round was monstrous for that time—25 kg. The muzzle energy of the 122-mm gun on the IS-2 was one and a half times higher than the corresponding one on the Royal Tiger, two and a half times higher than the Tiger, and almost three times higher than the Panther. One good shot from the IS-2 redeemed the shortcomings of its gun. In October 1943, during tests at the Kubinka testing grounds near Moscow, an IS-2 with an armor-busting shell broke through the frontal armor of the Panther from a distance of 1,500 meters, then, having excess energy, the round went through the transmission, the armor wall of the weapon section, the engine, and even then, there remained so much energy that the round tore off the back armor wall of the body along the seams and threw it back several meters. The IS-2 tank gun was especially superior when engaging unarmored targets. The high-explosive fragmentation shell of the IS-2 weighed 25 kg against the 7 kg of the Panther shell. In general, what the IS-2 was needed for was not fighting Panthers and Tigers, but for breaking through the enemy's defenses. The main burden of fighting the heavy German tanks was assigned to the tank destroyer SU-100.

22. Colonel Franz Halder, *War Diary, 1939–1942* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1971), entry for June 24, 1941.
23. "Military and Numeric Composition of the Armed Forces of the USSR," *Statistical Almanac*, no. 1 (June 22, 1941) (Moscow: Military History Institute, Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, 1994), 241.
24. Guderian, *A Soldier's Memoirs*, 121.
25. K. Galitsky, *The Years of Hard Trials* (Moscow: Nauka, 1973), 79.
26. A. I. Rodimtzev, *Motherland, These Are Your Sons* (Kiev: Politizdat, 1982), 291.
27. *World War II Almanac, 1931–1945* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1981), 164.
28. Steven Zaloga and James Grandsen, *Soviet Heavy Tanks* (London: Osprey, 1981), 12–13.
29. Liddell Hart, ed., *The Soviet Army* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1956), B.H.122.
30. Zaloga and Grandsen, *Soviet Tanks and Combat Vehicles of World War Two*, 175.
31. Hermann Hoth, *Panzer Operations* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1961), 360.

Chapter 10

Epigraph: Adolf Hitler, August 4, 1941, quoted in Guderian, *A Soldier's Memoirs*, 256.

1. *Domestic Armored Vehicles: Twentieth Century*, 1: 17.
2. *Encyclopedia of German Tanks of World War Two*, 261.
3. *Domestic Armored Vehicles: Twentieth Century*, 1: 17. In 1934 the USSR produced 3,556 tanks of all kinds and modifications; in 1935: 2,994; in 1936: 3,905; in 1937: 1,558; in 1938: 2,270; in 1939: 3,034.
4. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, January 17, 1998.
5. *Domestic Armored Vehicles: Twentieth Century*, 1: 17.
6. "Military and Numeric Composition of the Armed Forces of the USSR," 241.
7. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, January 17, 1998.
8. J. F. Milsom, *Russian BT Series* (Surrey, England: Profile Publications, Ltd., 1971).
9. M. Bariatsky and M. Kolomiets, *Light Tanks BT-2 and BT-5* (Moscow: Modelist-Constructor, 1996), 16; M. Bariatsky and M. Kolomiets, *Light Tank BT-7* (Moscow: Modelist-Constructor, 1996), 15; M. Pavlov, I. Zheltov, and I. Pavlov, *Domestic Armored Vehicles* (Moscow: Hobby Kniga, 2002), 182.
10. Pavlov, Zheltov, and Pavlov, *Domestic Armored Vehicles*, 182.
11. Meltiukhov, *Stalin's Missed Opportunity*, 525.
12. *Voyna I Revolyutsia* [War and Revolution], September–October, 1934.
13. In October 1939, the 6th Armored Brigade (more than 250 BT tanks, commanded by Colonel M. P. Pavelkin) rode from Khalkhin-Gol to Urukhan covering a distance of 670 km. The ride was conducted with tracks removed and the tanks moving on wheels. It took thirty-nine operational hours for the ride to be completed, covering 150 km per 24-hour period on average. The brigade was awarded the Red Banner Order. It shows how impetuous and dangerous BT tanks could have been in breaking through an enemy's territory in case of a sudden blitzkrieg kind of war.

14. *Complete World Encyclopedia of Tanks, 1915–2000* (Minsk: Harvest, 1999), 123–24. For the first time in world history a truly amphibious tank was designed and built by the British firm Vickers-Armstrong in 1931. The vehicle was designated as the Vickers-Carden-Lloyd (A-4) and was considered a progenitor of all the amphibious tanks. It was never added to the British armored forces arsenal. Single units of this tank were sold to China, Japan, the Netherlands, and Thailand. This is another example of how the West did not use the great achievements of its designers, while the Soviet Union was able to appreciate and exploit these products.
15. *British and American Tanks of World War II* (New York: ARCO, 1969), 11.
16. S. Fedoseev, *Japanese Armored Vehicles, 1939–1945* (Moscow: Bronecollectsia, 1995), 20–23.
17. A. V. Karpenko, *Review of National Armor-Tank Technology, 1905–1995* (St. Petersburg: Nevskiy Bastion, 1996), 194.
18. *Ibid.*, 200.
19. “Military and Numerical Composition,” 241.
20. Shmelev, *The Tank's History*, 77.
21. Karpenko, *Review of National Armor-Tank Technology*, 189.

Chapter 11

Epigraph: VIZh, no. 1 (1969): 62

1. V. N. Shunkov, *Red Army's Weapons* (Minsk: Harvest, 1999), 287–88, 297.
2. A. Kesselring, *Gedanken zum Zweiten Weltkrieg* [Thoughts on World War II] (Bonn: 1956), 78.
3. Shavrov, *The History of Aircraft Design in the USSR, 1938–1950*, 45.
4. N. T. Gordiukov and D. B. Khazanov, *Close-Range Bomber Su-2* (Moscow: Technika-Molodiozhi, 2000), 63–64.
5. Shavrov, *The History of Aircraft Design in the USSR, 1938–1950*, 50.
6. L. M. Kuzmina, *Chief Designer Pavel Sukhoy* (Moscow: Molodaya Gvardia, 1983), 57.
7. D. Horikoshi, M. Okumia, and M. Kaidin, *Zero! Japanese Aviation in the Second World War* (Moscow: AST, 1999), 453.
8. In the spring of 1941, the more powerful Ju-87D-1 went into production. It was equipped with the 1,500-hp motor. Armaments: two wing-mounted machine guns (or two wing 20-mm cannons) plus dual machine guns to defend the rear hemisphere. Bomb payload: nominal—1,000 kg, maximum—1,800 kg.
9. E. Middeldorf, *Tactics in the Russian Campaign* [in Russian], (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1958), 225.
10. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, December 15, 1992.

Chapter 12

Epigraph: Halder, *War Diary*, entry from July 17, 1941.

1. E. Chernikov, *Armored Ground Attack Aircraft (Shtumovik) IL-2* (Moscow, 1997), 46. Two types of under-wing mount: either 8 RS-82, or 4 RS-82 and 4 RS-132.
2. *Ibid.*, 14.
3. Shavrov, *The History of Aircraft Design in the USSR, 1938–1950*, 263.
4. A. N. Medved and D. B. Khazanov, *Dive Bomber Pe-2* (Moscow: Exprint, 1999), part 1, 16.
5. M. N. Kozhevnikov, *Command and Staff of the Air Forces of the Soviet Army in the Great Patriotic War* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), 16.
6. *USSR Aircraft Industry, 1917–1945* (Moscow: TSAGI, 1992–1994), 2: 41, 235.
7. *The Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945: Military History Essays* (Moscow: Nauka, 1998), 1: 113; O. Groehler, *Geschichte des Luftkriegs, 1910 bis 1980* [History of Aerial Warfare, 1910–1980] (Berlin, 1981).
8. *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg* [The German Reich and World War II] (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1979), 5/1: 555.
9. Groehler, *Geschichte des Luftkriegs*. The majority of historians accept the data provided by German scholar O. Groehler as the most reliable—Hitler deployed against the USSR 3,520 planes, including 945 bombers, 400 dive-bombers and ground attackers (inclusive of sixty ground attack planes from the II.(Sch)/LG2 (formation number), 1,036 single-engine fighters, 93 two-engine fighters, 120 long-range

reconnaissance aircraft integrated into air fleets, 252 transport aircraft, 674 forward-based aircraft (the majority of which were range-reconnaissance aircraft). Hereby, if we would count bombers and fighters of all kinds, we will have 2,474 combat aircraft, that is, aircraft designed to destroy the enemy in air and on land.

10. M. V. Zefirov, *Ground-Attack Aircraft of the Luftwaffe* (Moscow: AST, 2001), 37. The maximum speed of the Hs-123A-1 was 338 km/h.
11. V. R. Kotelnikov, “Flagship of Stalin’s Falcons,” *Aviatsia i Vremia*, no. 4 (1997). As of June 22, 1941, the Soviet air force had in its ranks 516 TB-3 (Heavy Bomber-3) plus 25 TB-3 within Soviet Naval Aviation, for a total of 541 aircraft.
12. V. B. Shavrov, *The History of Aircraft Design in the USSR before 1938* (Moscow: Mashino-stroyenie, 1985), 488.
13. If one were to compare the Ju-87B-1 with the SB 1941, with M-105P engines.
14. *Luftwaffe’s Wings: Combat Aircraft of the Third Reich* (part 4) (Moscow: TsAGI, 1995), 41.
15. Mikhail Maslov, *Fighter I-16* (Moscow: Armada, 1997), 33.
16. A. Price, *World War II Fighter Conflict* (London: Macdonald and Jane’s, 1975), 18–21.
17. Maslov, *Fighter I-16*, 77.
18. V. Romanov, *Messerschmitt Bf.109* (Moscow: Exprint, 1994), 29.
19. Maslov, *Fighter I-16*, 40.
20. Maslov, *Fighter I-16*, 33.
21. “The Early Period of the War,” *Voyna i Revoliutsia*, no. 9 (1929): 19–20.
22. *Posev*, June 17, 1951.

Chapter 13

Epigraph: Colonel A. I. Rodimtsev, speech at the Eighteenth Congress of the Communist Party, 1939.

1. *Voennyi Vestnik* [Military Herald], no. 4 (1940): 76–77.
2. *Field Rules of the Red Army for 1936 (PU-36)*, Article 7.
3. *VIZh*, no. 10 (1982): 75.
4. The Communist Party Archive of the Institute of Party History, Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine, Fund 7, Index 1, Case 1330, Sheet 32.
5. Deputy Commander of the Air Force Lieutenant General K. Kurochkin, in *VIZh*, no. 8 (1980): 94.
6. *VIZh*, no. 9 (1975): 81.
7. *Moscow Military District* (Moscow: Moskovski Rabochi, 1985), 177.
8. *The Year 1941* (Moscow: International Foundation “Demokratia,” 1998), 2: 104–106. Decree of the Central Committee of the ACP (b) and the Council of the People’s Commissars “Regarding New Units of the Red Army,” no. 1112–459cc, April 23, 1941.
9. *Soviet Air Assault Troops* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1986), 51. Here is the structure of the air assault corps at the end of May 1941: 1st Air Assault Corps: Major General M. A. Usenko, brigades 1, 204, 211 (Kiev military district); 2nd Air Assault Corps: Major General F. M. Kharitonov, brigades 2, 3, 4 (Kharkov military district); 3rd Air Assault Corps: Major General V. A. Glazunov, brigades 5, 6, 212 (Odessa); 4th Air Assault Corps: Major General A. S. Zhadov, brigades 7, 8, 214 (Pukhovichi, Byelorussia); 5th Air Assault Corps: Major General I. S. Bezuglyi, brigades 9, 10, 201 (Daugavpils, Latvia); the 202nd Air Assault Brigade remained independent. The corps were fully manned by June 1, 1941.
10. A. I. Rodimtzev, *Motherland, These Are Your Sons* (Kiev: Politizdat, 1982), 162.
11. I. G. Starchak, *From the Sky into the Battle: Memoirs of the Chief of Paratroopers of the Western Front* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1965).
12. A. S. Zhadov, *Four Years of War* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1978), 14.
13. Here is the structure of these corps in August 1941: 6th Air Assault Corps: Major General A. I. Pastevich, brigades 11, 12, 13 (Moscow district); 7th Corps: Major General I. I. Gubarevich, brigades 14, 15, 16 (Povolzhie); 8th Corps: Major General V. A. Glazkov, brigades 17, 18, 19 (Moscow district); 9th Corps: Major General M. I. Denissenko, brigades 20, 21, 22 (Ivanov district); 10th Corps: Colonel N. P. Ivanov, brigades 23, 24, 25 (Povolzhie, Gorokhovets camps).
14. *Encyclopedia of Aviation* (Moscow: Bol’shaja Rossijskaja Encyclopedia, 1994), 421.
15. The author of the idea to deploy tanks at the enemy’s rear by using gliders’ wings was the great American

designer Walter Christie. Back in the early 1930s he designed a draft of this concept. In the late 1930s Oleg Antonov borrowed the American idea and made it a reality. However, Antonov was too late by the time the war began. Besides, the war did not start the way Stalin had planned. A winged tank was flying in 1942, but nobody needed it in a defensive war.

16. *The Year 1941*, 2: 366–67. In 1941: land-based 5-seater gliders: 500; land-based 11-seater gliders: 1,000; 11-seater hydroplanes: 200; land-based 20-seater gliders: 300. Total for 1941: 2,000 units. Total for 1942: 5,500 units.
17. Index mark PS-84—passenger aircraft, factory #84. From September 17, 1942, the aircraft was named the Li-2 in honor of the engineer-in-chief of the factory, B. P. Lisunov.
18. *Aircraft Engineering in the USSR, 1917–1945* (Moscow: 1994), 2: 237.
19. *Aircraft Engineering in the USSR, 1917–1945*, 2: 236; *Aviatsia i Vremia (Aviation and Time)*, no. 1 (1998), 16. Decree of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) and the Council of the People's Commissars from April 23, 1941, Paragraph 4 says: “for the purpose of transportation of the airborne and air-landing troops, the heavy aircraft TB-7 and TB-3 shall be used, as well as the middle-size aircraft DB-3 and Douglas.” With appropriate arrangements, the bombers DB-3 and DB-3F could be used to tow A-7 and G-11 gliders and to airdrop up to seven men. In 1939–41, 2,822 bombers of these types were built. By June 22, 1941, in the western regions of the USSR and under long-distance bombing command, 1,332 aircraft were deployed, 1,122 of them DB-3 and DB-3F.
20. Documents of the Red Army High Command, Officers' Conference, December 23–31, 1940.
21. *Airborne Operations*, ed. Philip, St. Croix, (London: Salamander, 1978), 30.
22. Rodimtzev, *Motherland, These Are Your Sons*, 29.
23. Zhadov, *Four Years of War*, 16.
24. The “Guards” designation of military units appeared in the Red Army in September of 1941 as a part of Stalin's overall change from internationalist ideology and rhetoric toward nationalist Russian patriotism, as a means of rallying people towards the defense of their Russian motherland and not the international Communist expansionist movement. “Guards” units in tsarist Russia were the select, privileged, best-trained, and most reliable units prior to 1917.
25. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 25, 2002.
26. Yury Nenakhov, *Airborne Troops in the Second World War* (Minsk: Harvest, 1998), 194. The “Guards” designation was awarded to all newly formed air assault rifle divisions in recognition of the feats of their predecessors in the 1941–42 campaigns and as an advance for their future military contribution.

Chapter 14

Epigraph: V. Rapoport, Yu. Alexeyev, *Betrayal of the Motherland: Essays on the History of the Red Army* [in Russian] (London: Overseas Publications Interchange Ltd., 1988).

1. *Questions of Strategy and Operational Art in Soviet Military Works, 1917–1940* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1965), 117.
2. M. Tukhachevski, *Selected Works in 2 Volumes* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1964).
3. Central Archive of the National Economy of the USSR, Fund 7297, Index 41, Case 9, Sheet 155.
4. *VIZh*, no. 3 (1999).

Chapter 15

1. Walther Schellenberg, *The Labyrinth: Memoirs of a German Intelligence Man* (Moscow: Dom Biruni, 1991).
2. *VIZh*, no. 1 (1993): 60–63.
3. O. F. Suvenirov, *The Tragedy of the RKKA* (Moscow: Terra, 1998).
4. F. W. von Mellentin, *Tank Battles, 1939–1941* (St. Petersburg: Polygon, 1998), 244.
5. G. I. Gerasimov, “The Effective Impact of the 1937–1938 Purges on the Commanding Personnel of the RKKA [Workers' and Peasants' Red Army],” *Russian Historical Journal*, no. 1 (1999).
6. J. Goebbels, *Diaries of 1945*, Smolensk: Rusich, 1998,

Chapter 16

Epigraph: Joseph Stalin, speech at a meeting of the Politburo of the Party Central Committee, August 19, 1939. (HAVAS News Agency, November 28, 1939).

1. M. Vodopianov, *Friends in the Sky* (Moscow: Sovetskaya Rossia, 1971), 147.
2. *Luftwaffe's Wings*, 20.
3. I. M. Maiski, *Spain, 1918–1972: A Historical Sketch* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), 210.
4. *VIZh*, no. 7 (1986): 85.
5. *Istoricheskiy Arkhiv* [Historical Archive], no. 2 (1962): 172.
6. *VIZh*, no. 7 (1986): 87.
7. Roman Khrapachevskiy, “The Spanish Gold of the Kremlin,” *Russkiy Focus*, no. 7 (May 14, 2001). By 1936, Spain’s gold reserve was more than six hundred tons. When the military mutiny began, the major part of it was stored in the Bank of Spain cellars in Madrid. After consultations with Soviet representatives, the government of Spain approached Moscow with the request to “accept for storage” the gold of the Republic of Spain. The official reason for this was the threat of the mutineers’ takeover of Madrid in October 1936. On October 15, prime minister Francisco Largo Caballero and treasury minister Juan Negrin approached the Soviet Government with the suggestion to “accept for storage” more than five hundred tons of gold. Stalin immediately ordered the evacuation of the Spanish gold reserve. Here is a quote from the minutes of the Politburo of the Central Committee of VKP(b) meeting from October 17, 1936: “Paragraph 56. Comrade Rosenberg’s issue. Determination: To authorize Comrade Rosenberg to reply to the Spanish Government that we are ready to accept the gold reserve for storage, and that we approve the evacuation of this gold by our ships returning from [Spanish] ports.” After the political decision was made the operation began in full swing: on October 20, the cable with the approval came to Spain, and by October 22–25 it was already loaded on Soviet ships in Cartagena. The total cargo was 510 tons of gold.
8. *Ibid.*, no. 7 (1971): 77.
9. *History of the Second World War, 1939–1945*, 2: 55.
10. *Ibid.*, 54.
11. A. P. Yaremchuk, *Russian Volunteers in Spain, 1936–1939* [in Russian] (San Francisco: Globus, 1983), 12.
12. N. N. Voronov became Chief Marshal of Artillery; F. A. Agaltsov became Marshal of Aviation, commander of long-range aviation, deputy commander of the Air Force; M. I. Nedelin became Chief Marshal of Artillery, deputy minister of defense of the USSR, and, from 1959, head commander of strategic missile forces; P. V. Rychagov became Lieutenant General, head of the Central Command of the Red Army’s Air Force, deputy of the People’s Commissar for Defense of the USSR; Kh. U. Mamsurov became Colonel General, first deputy of the GRU (Main Intelligence Directorate); P. P. Vechnyi became Lieutenant General, military aide to Stalin; I. I. Proskurov became Lieutenant General of the Air Force, chief of the GRU; P. I. Batov, D. G. Pavlov, V. Y. Kolpakchi, and N. G. Lyachenko became Generals of the Army; A. I. Rodimtzev, G. M. Shtern, M. S. Shumilov, V. A. Yushkevich, and T. T. Khrukin became Colonel Generals; V. A. Alafuzof became Admiral, chief of naval staff; N. E. Bassisty became Admiral, commander of the Black Sea fleet, first deputy of the minister of the navy; A. G. Golovko became Admiral —during all of World War II he commanded the Northern fleet, after the war he became the chief of naval staff, deputy of the minister of the navy.
13. “National-revolutionary War of the Spanish People,” *Voprosy Istorii* [Questions of History], no. 11 (1953): 11.
14. R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, *World History of Wars* (St. Petersburg and Moscow: AST, 1998), 4: 41.
15. N. Voronov, *Serving in the Military* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1963), 80.
16. Leon Trotsky, *Bulleten Oppozitsii* [Bulletin of the Opposition] no. 71 (November 1938): 7.
17. *Ibid.*, no. 79–80 (June 21, 1939): 13.
18. S. M. Krivoshein, *Warriors’ Stories* (Moscow: Molodaya Gvardia, 1962), 8.

Chapter 17

First Epigraph: Ogonek, no. 30 (1989): 10.

Second Epigraph: A. Avtorkhanov, Origins of Partocracy (Party-rule) (Frankfurt: Posev, 1973), 356.

1. *Pravda*, June 1, 1939.
2. Maslov, *Fighter I-16*, 19–20.

3. *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn* [International Affairs], no. 3 (1959): 157.
4. *VIZh*, no. 12 (1963): 25.
5. *VIZh*, no. 5 (1989): 35.
6. *VIZh*, no. 6 (1991): 11.
7. Ingeborg Fleischhauer, *The Pact: Hitler, Stalin and the German Diplomatic Initiative, 1938–39* (Moscow: Progress, 1990), 237–38; G. L. Rozanov, *Stalin-Hitler: The Documented Story of the Soviet-German Diplomatic Relationship in 1939–41* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya, 1991), 84–86. This decision was presented in the form of a telegram, sent by Molotov to the Soviet chargé d'affaires in Germany, Gheorghy Astakhov. He received the message on Saturday, August 12. The same day the telegram's content was conveyed to Hitler, who at that moment was negotiating with the Italian foreign minister Count Ciano. After some deliberation, Hitler told the following to the Italian minister about the telegram in the following way: "The Russians have agreed with the decision to send a German representative to Moscow to conduct political negotiations." Ciano himself left the following entry: "Russian-German contacts are developing very favorably and, specifically, several days ago came the Russian invitation to send a German plenipotentiary representative to Moscow to negotiate a Friendship Pact."
8. On August 19, 1939, Stalin gave an order to the Soviet Trade Mission in Berlin (not a direct one, of course) to immediately sign the Trade and Economic Agreement, which had been ready for a long time. The same day Stalin, via Molotov, told Schulenburg that Ribbentrop might arrive in Moscow on August 26–27. Later, Hitler tearfully begged to move Ribbentrop's visit to Moscow to August 23.
9. Lev Bezymenskiy, *Hitler and Stalin before the Fight* (Moscow: Veche, 2000), 290; A. O. Chubarian, ed., *War and Politics, 1939–1941* (Moscow: Nauka, 1999), 38, 97.
10. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pt. 2, chap. XIV.

Chapter 18

Epigraph: Antonov-Ovseenko, *Portrait of a Tyrant*, 296.

1. Yury Felshtinsky, ed., *It Must Be Published: USSR-Germany 1939–1941, Documents and Materials* (Moscow: Moscow Worker, 1991), 90.

Chapter 19

Epigraph: Halder, *War Diary, 1939–1942*, entry from June 23, 1941.

1. *Soviet Military Encyclopedia*, 8: 353.
2. B. Muller-Hillebrand, *Germany's Ground Forces 1933–1945* (Moscow: EKSMO, 2002), 1: 157.
3. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, August 18, 1993.
4. The main strike forces in the breakthrough of the Japanese defense lines in the August 20 offensive were the excellent twin-engine bombers SB, totaling 181 aircraft. Besides these, several squadrons of TB-3 heavy bombers were used. They bombed the Japanese positions from an altitude of 1,500 to 2,000 meters. All together, twenty-three heavy bombers were deployed.
5. Basil Henry Liddell Hart, *Strategy: The Indirect Approach* (Moscow: Innostrannaya Literatura, 1957), 314.

Chapter 20

Epigraph: Boris Shaposhnikov, *The Army's Brain* (Moscow-Leningrad: Voyengiz, 1927–29), 413.

1. *VIZh*, no. 6 (1976): 68.
2. Yakovlev, *Life's Task*, 498.
3. Dmitry F. Ustinov, *In the Name of Victory* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1988), 91.
4. G. K. Zhukov, *Memoirs and Reflections* (Moscow: APN, 1969), 296.
5. *VIZh*, no. 2 (1962).
6. K. A. Meretskov, *In Service to the People* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1968), 181.
7. Yakovlev, *Life's Task*, 212.
8. *Pravda* (September 3, 1939). The draft age of eighteen years was established for those who had graduated from high school. Mostly they were drafted into military schools (roughly equivalent to officer training schools)—willing or not.
9. "Operational and total strength of the USSR Armed Forces during the Great Patriotic War (1941–

- 1945),” *Statistical Digest*, no. 1 (June 22, 1941), (Moscow: Military History Institute, Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, 1994), 10–12; *50 Years of the Soviet Armed Forces* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968), 201; *History of the Second World War, 1939–1945*, 2: 199–202, 3: 418–19, 4: 18; *The Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945: Military History Essays*, 1: 89; *The Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945: Encyclopedia* (Moscow: Sovetskaya Encyclopedia, 1985), 311; Meltiukhov, *Stalin’s Missed Opportunity*, 292–95, 360.
10. The USSR Armed Forces’ strength by June 22, 1941, was 5,762,000, including the Red Army—5,081,000, navy—344,000, and interior troops and border guards—337,000. The numerical increase of the Red Army in 1939–41 was not a straightforward process of constant growth. Before Germany attacked the USSR, the Red Army reached its highest numbers not by June 22, 1941, but by September 20, 1939. By September 20, 1939, the Red Army—without the navy, interior troops, and border guards—numbered 5,289,400 men (in comparison to 5,081,000 by June 22, 1941). Here is how it happened: On the night of September 7, 1939, a decision was made to execute a partial mobilization of the Red Army. The troops were given the order to start a “Big Training Call-up” (BUS). Under the People’s Commissar Decree No. 2/1/50698 of May 20, 1939, the acronym BUS was a coded signal for the covert mobilization. BUS with an “A” designation meant deployment of individual units with the operational readiness date of up to ten days with their support elements reaching war-level strength. The mobilization was supposed to be executed with the maximum secrecy. All together, at the beginning of the “Big Training Call-up” were involved: headquarters of twenty-two rifle, five cavalry, and three tank corps; ninety-eight rifle and fourteen cavalry divisions; twenty-eight tank and three mechanized rifle/machine-gun; and one airborne brigade, deployed in seven military districts. In total, 2,610,136 men were drafted. Under the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and People’s Commissar of Defense Decree No. 177 of September 23, they were declared mobilized until a “special instruction.” At the same time, under the Council of People’s Commissars of USSR Decree No. 1348-268cc from September 1939, a new military draft was supposed to start from September 5 to reinforce the troops in the Far East region, plus one thousand men for each newly formed division, and from September 15 to reinforce the troops in the rest of the military districts. Besides, under the new law regarding the universal military duty, the call-up period was extended by one year for 190,000 soldiers who were drafted in 1939. As a result, by September 20, 1940, the Red Army’s strength reached 5 million men. It was clear evidence of Stalin’s insecurity about Great Britain and France’s reaction to the Soviet invasion into Poland. Although he did everything possible to make Soviet actions not look like assistance to Hitler, there was a reason to be concerned that, after declaring war on Germany, London and Paris were going to declare war on the USSR as well. Once the intentions of the Western powers became clear, the Red Army began to deflate its swollen ranks, which had been prepared for a big war. A total of 1,613,803 men were retired from the Red Army from September 29 to January 7, 1940. However, when the war with Finland began it required that the Red Army’s losses be replenished and its strength boosted. On December 28, 1939, a decision was made to call up to the Red Army 546,400 men to reinforce the troops in the western military districts, as well as fifty thousand reserve officers. In the same time, in the Volga, Ural, and Siberian Military Districts 375,000 young men of five junior conscription ages were drafted. After the war with Finland was over, the Red Army started to decrease its ranks again, and reached its minimum strength by September 1, 1940: 3,423,499 men. Afterwards, the Red Army’s ranks started to increase again.
 11. *VIZh*, no. 3 (1999): 10.

Chapter 21

Epigraph: Colonel S. A. Vauptsassov, *At a Troublesome Crossroads: A Chekist’s Memoirs* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1971), 203.

1. *VIZh*, no. 7 (1982): 55.
2. Anthony Sutton, *National Suicide: Military Aid to the Soviet Union* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1973), 152–53. According to the opinion of the American historian Anthony Sutton, the German delegation transferred to the Soviet Union blueprints of the most successful German submarine designs in June of 1926. The German V-III-class submarine was “the most successful design of all, ever produced.” In Sutton’s opinion, the Soviet Schuka-class submarine is based exactly on the

German V-III design, and the S-class is based on the German VII-class design. Sergei Gorlov, *Top Secret: The Moscow-Berlin Alliance, 1923–1933* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2001), 264. In the opinion of the Soviet scientist S. A. Gorlov: “It is, of course, difficult to imagine that Soviet shipbuilding, from which in German professional opinion ‘nothing could be learned,’ all of a sudden could develop several promising types of submarines. Even though such ship designers as B. M. Malinin, A. N. Krylov, V. P. Kostenko, and others were naturally gifted talents, it is doubtful that they would have ignored such outstanding completed designs and other specific German assistance.”

3. A. B. Shirokorad, *Ships and Cutters of the USSR Navy, 1939–1945* (catalog) (Minsk: Harvest, 2002), 241. The following details are of interest: the construction of the ship commenced on January 11, 1937, in Livorno—in other words, at a time when Soviet and Italian “volunteers” were killing each other in Spain. The acceptance act was signed on April 18, 1939, after the unarmed ship, camouflaged as a merchant vessel and manned by an Italian crew, departed for Odessa, where it arrived on May 5, 1939.
4. M. M. Kirian, ed., *Military-Technological Progress and the USSR Armed Forces* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1982), 189.
5. *The Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945: Encyclopedia*, 409.
6. *History of the Second World War, 1939–1945*, 2: 190.
7. *VIZh*, no. 5 (1980): 71.
8. N. A. Voznessensky, *War Economics of the USSR during the Period of the Great Patriotic War* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1947), 42.
9. Muller-Hillebrand, *German Ground Forces, 1933–1945*.
10. *Ibid.*, 1: 161.
11. *Ibid.*, 3: 50–51.
12. Several armies that were created for the purpose of attack were officially called “shock” armies from 1942. But the term was unofficially used from the mid-1920s in Soviet military theoretical works. These armies were better equipped than the ordinary ones.
13. Boris V. Sokolov, *The Cost of Victory (Great Patriotic: The Unknown About the Known)* (Moscow: Moskovskiy Rabochiy, 1991), 64–66. The losses of explosives and ammunition production capacities were exceptionally high, one could even say catastrophic. The Soviet Union could not fight Hitler with the remaining 15 percent capacity. That is why, from the beginning of the talks on the Lend-Lease supplies, Stalin and his representatives were asking first of all for the explosives and powder to be sent. From mid-1941 to mid-1945, the production of explosives in the USSR came to 600,000 tons. R. H. Jones, *The Roads to Russia: United States Lend-Lease to the Soviet Union* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), appendixes. The United States supplied 295,600 tons of explosives. *Soviet Foreign Policy in the Period of the Great Patriotic War* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1946), 145–47. Additionally, Great Britain and Canada delivered 22,300 tons of powder. Therefore, Western deliveries of explosives reached 53 percent of the total volume of Soviet production. Also, the delivery of American equipment for the production of bombs, shells, and ammunition played a tremendous role in the course of the war. Specifically, in June of 1942, the most modern equipment for the daily production of 10 million 7.62-mm rounds (3.5 billion rounds a year) was delivered. Without this truly crucial assistance, the shell and round shortage that struck the Red Army in the fall of 1941 would not have been overcome.

Chapter 22

Epigraph: Jan Gamarnik, Chief of the Political Directorate of the Red Army, in a speech given at a meeting of the National Committee for Defense of the USSR on March 15, 1937.

1. *The Winter War, 1939–1940: A Political History* (Moscow: Nauka, 1998), 1: 118–26.
2. N. L. Volkovski, ed., *Secrets and Lessons of the Winter War, 1939–1940* (St. Petersburg: Poligon, 2000), 141–44; Boris V. Sokolov, *Secrets of the Finnish War* (Moscow: Veche, 2000), 63–70. The 106th Rifles Division was organized in accordance with the October 25, 1939, order of the USSR Defense Commissar. Shortly before the beginning of the war, the division was reorganized as a special corps with the same number, although at that time the Red Army rifle corps were numbered only up to fifty-six. The commander of the corps was Division Commander A. M. Anttila. On November 23, the corps was renamed as the 1st Alpine Rifle Corps of the Finnish People’s Army. It was staffed with the Finns

and Karelians that lived in the Leningrad military district. By the beginning of the war Anttila's corps, which consisted of two twin regimental divisions, numbered 13,405 personnel. However, there were not enough Finns and Karelians; therefore many Russians and Ukrainians, especially officers, were entered in the roster as Finns and Karelians. For example, the corps' chief of staff, Brigade Commander F. N. Romanov, was named "Raikas," and the headquarters' political department chief, Regimental Commissar V. P. Tereshkin, was called "Tervonen."

3. Volkovski, *Secrets and Lessons of the Winter War, 1939–1940*, 138. Kuusinen's wife, Aino, was imprisoned in jails and camps from 1938 until 1955.
4. "Diplomatic Note of the USSR Government, handed to the Envoy of Finland, concerning provocative shelling of Soviet troops by Finnish Military Units," *Izvestia* (November 27, 1939).
5. *Soviet Military Encyclopedia*, 7: 419.
6. G. F. Krivosheev, ed., *Russia and the USSR in the Twentieth-Century Wars: Armed Forces Losses (A Statistical Study)* (Moscow: Olma Press, 2001), 213.
7. *The Winter War, 1939–40*, 2: 53.
8. L. Rendulic, *Commanding the Troops* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), 189.
9. Shunkov, *Red Army's Weapons*, 230–31; *The Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945: Encyclopedia*, 516. The weight of the B-4 type concrete piercing shell from the 1939 203-mm howitzer was 100 kg.
10. In theory, a 203-mm howitzer did have a normal firing speed of one shell per minute, but in the difficult conditions of the Finnish winter, the real firing speed was lower.
11. *The Winter War, 1939–40*, 2: 222.
12. *Ibid.*, 239.
13. *Admissions and Revelations: Nazi Leaders on the Third Reich's War against the USSR: Secret Speeches, Diaries, Memoirs* (Smolensk, Russia: Rusich, 2000), 195–96, 199.
14. *Ibid.*, 195.
15. *The Winter War, 1939–40*, 1: 376.
16. Piker, *Hitler's Table Talks*, 205.

Chapter 23

Epigraph: Halder, *War Diary*, entry for June 30, 1941.

1. Albert Speer, *Memoirs* (Smolensk, Russia: Russich, 1997), 312–13.
2. N. V. Alisov and B. S. Khorev, *Economic and Social Geography of the World* (Moscow: Gardariki, 2001), 448; *History of the Second World War, 1939–1945*, 3: 282. Thirty percent of the German metallurgical industry's demand for iron ore was supplied by Sweden.
3. *The Red Banner Baltic Fleet in the Battle for Leningrad* (Moscow: Nauka, 1973), 8.
4. *VIZh*, no. 3 (1973): 78.
5. F. Ruge, *War on the Sea, 1939–1945* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1957), 209.
6. "Testimony of the Admiral of the Soviet Union Fleet, I. S. Isaakov," *Znamia* [Banner], no. 5 (1988): 77.
7. *The Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945: Encyclopedia*, 75.
8. *VIZh*, no. 4 (1962): 34.
9. *The Warpath of the Soviet Navy* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), 537.
10. Piker, *Hitler's Table Talks*, 348 (entry made on June 5, 1942).
11. *History of the Second World War, 1939–1945*, 4: 329.
12. *The Year 1941*, 1: 418–23.

Chapter 24

Epigraph: Piker, *Hitler's Table Talks*, 303.

1. *History of the Second World War, 1939–1945*, 3: 231–32.
2. *Ibid.*, 10: 17.
3. Piker, *Hitler's Table Talks*, 477 (entry made on June 27, 1942).
4. *The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and Its Consequences for Bessarabia: A Collection of Documents* (Chişinău, Moldova: 1991), 51.
5. *Foreign Affairs Documents: 1940–22 June 1941* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnoshenia, 1998), 23: 1: 519–20.

6. Ya. T. Eiduss, *Liquid Fuel in War* (Moscow: Akademizdat, 1943), 74–75.
7. Halder, *War Diary*, 2: 534, 536, 574; entries of May 19 and 20, and June 13, 1941.
8. Muller-Hillebrand, *German Ground Forces, 1933–1945*, 3: 67.

Chapter 25

Epigraph: Joseph Stalin, *Pravda*, February 5, 1931.

1. I. G. Starinov, *Mines Await Their Hour* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1964), 176.
2. *Ibid.*, 186.
3. One can argue that Hitler's invasion was launched not only from Eastern Prussia and Poland, but from Finland, Hungary, and Romania as well. This is true. However, the USSR and Hungary did not share a common border. It was the Red Army who reached the Hungarian border as a result of the "Liberation March" in September 1939. As a result Hitler was handed an opportunity to attack from that nation's territory, which he did in 1941. Before 1941 there were no major German military units in Romania and Finland. They were deployed there because of Stalin's aggression against these countries. In order to protect themselves against Stalin, the Romanian and Finnish governments allowed German troops to use their territory.
4. Order of National Commissar of Defense no. 400, November 7, 1940. It was published the same day in *Pravda*, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, and other Soviet newspapers.
5. Stalin's speech at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, January 22, 1926, published in *Pravda*, February 18, 1926.
6. Stalin, *Pravda*, September 15, 1927.
7. *Pravda*, March 2, 1936.
8. *Pravda*, May 14, 1939.
9. *Pravda*, August 18, 1940.
10. Krivoshein, *Warriors' Stories*, 8.
11. *Pravda*, January 1, 1941.
12. *Pravda*, March 4, 1941.

Chapter 26

Epigraph: Quoted in Starinov, *Mines Await their Hour*, 179.

1. *Ibid.*, 18.
2. *Ibid.*, 22.
3. *Ibid.*, 175.
4. Meretskov, *In Service to the People*, 184.
5. L. M. Sandalov, *The Bygone* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1966), 99.
6. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 15, 1984.
7. Zhukov, *Memoirs and Reflections*, 207.
8. *Kievsky Krasnoznamennyi: History of the Krasnoznamennyi Kiev Military District, 1919–1972* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), 147.
9. *Ibid.*, 143.
10. *Soviet Military Forces* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1978), 255.
11. K. S. Moskalenko, *In the Southwestern Direction: A Commander's Memoirs* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), 24.

Chapter 27

Epigraph: Russian Center for the Archiving and Study of Modern History, Holding 88, Register 1, Dossier 898, Folio 21.

1. V. I. Boyarskiy, *The Guerilla War: A History of Lost Opportunities* (Minsk: Harvest; Moscow: ACT, 2001), 60.
2. Starinov, *Mines Await Their Hour*, 40.
3. P. K. Ponomarenko, *VIZh*, no. 1 (1962).
4. Although he was an ethnic Lithuanian, and in Lithuanian his last name is spelled "Vaupsas," in official documents and historic literature his name was Russified: "Vaupshassov."

5. S. A. Vaupshassov, *At a Troublesome Crossroads: A Chekist's Memoirs* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1971), 203.

Chapter 28

- Epigraph:* P. G. Grigorenko, *You Only Meet Rats in the Underground* (New York, NY: Detinets, 1981), 140. Grigorenko participated in building the “Stalin Line.”
1. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 8, 1990.
 2. “Red corner”: a special room for Communist indoctrination.
 3. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, February 25, 1983.
 4. Grigorenko, *You Only Meet Rats in the Underground*, 140.
 5. R. G. Umanskyi, *On the Threshold of War* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1960), 35.
 6. A. I. Shebunin, *How Much Ground Have We Covered . . .* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1971), 58.
 7. *VIZh*, no. 12 (1987): 48.
 8. *VIZh*, no. 9 (1961): 120.
 9. *VIZh*, no. 7 (1961): 101; *VIZh*, no. 2 (1963): 12.
 10. *VIZh*, no. 7 (1961): 101.
 11. V. A. Anfilyov, *The Immortal Feat of Arms: The Investigation of the Eve of and the First Stage of the Great Patriotic War* (Moscow: Nauka, 1971), 162.
 12. Grigorenko, *You Only Meet Rats in the Underground*, 141.
 13. Voronov, *Serving in the Military*, 172.
 14. *Voprosy Istorii* [Questions of History], no. 5 (1970): 33.
 15. L. M. Sandalov, *The First Days of the War* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1989), 45.
 16. V. F. Zotov, *On the Northwestern Front, 1941–1943: A Collection of Articles by Participants in Military Engagements* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), 175.
 17. *VIZh*, no. 5 (1976): 91.
 18. *USSR Border Forces, 1939–June 1941: A Collection of Documents* (Moscow: Nauka, 1970), Documents 287, 344.
 19. Zhukov, *Memoirs and Reflections*, 161.
 20. K. Mallory and A. Ottar, *Architecture of Aggression* (London: Architectural Press, 1973), 123.

Chapter 29

- Epigraph:* *Bulleten Oppozitsii* [Bulletin of Opposition], nos. 79–80 (September 1939), 14.
1. Y. Felshtinsky, *Criminal Leaders* (Moscow: Terra, 1999), 290. Lenin spent the last period of his life in isolation, as organized by Stalin. On December 18, 1922, the Central Committee of the Communist Party issued a decree that “charged Comrade Stalin with personal responsibility for the isolation of Vladimir Ilyich from both personal contacts with employees and correspondence.” Stalin controlled everything: security, feeding, and medical “treatment.” Lenin was allowed to read only what Stalin permitted. Everything that Lenin wrote was given to Stalin. Actually, Stalin’s physicians did not allow Lenin to write much because of “concern” for his health.
 2. Bazhanov, *Memoirs of a Former Secretary of Stalin*, 141.
 3. *Ibid.*, 91.
 4. *Bulleten Oppozitsii* [Bulletin of Opposition], nos. 25–26 (November–December, 1931), 11.
 5. *Ibid.*, no. 35 (July 1933), 15.
 6. *Ibid.*, nos. 79–80 (September 1939).
 7. *Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation*, Fund 059, Index 1, Case 2314, Sheets 32–33.
 8. *Ibid.*, Storage 059, List 1, File 2315, Sheet 35–35a.
 9. *It Must Be Published: USSR-Germany 1939–1941*, 112.
 10. *Foreign Affairs Documents: 1940–22 June 1941*, 21: 2: 61–62.
 11. *It Must Be Published: USSR-Germany 1939–1941*, 112.
 12. *Ibid.*, 115.
 13. *Ibid.*, 125.
 14. *Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation*, Fund 059, Index 1, Case 2315, Sheet 35.
 15. *Foreign Affairs Documents: 1940–22 June 1941*, 21: 2: 136–37.
 16. *The Year 1941*, 1: 418–23.
 17. Basil Henry Liddell Hart, *The Second World War* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1976), 145.

Chapter 30

Epigraph: General G. K. Zhukov, lecture given at a conference of the High Command of the Red Army, December 26, 1940.

1. *On the Eve of the War: Documents of the Red Army High Command Officers' Conference, December 23–31, 1940*, 153–54
2. Zhukov, *Memoirs and Reflections*, 191.
3. *On the Eve of the War*, 177.
4. *Ibid.*, 255.
5. *Ibid.*, 209–10.
6. *Ibid.*, 210.
7. *Ibid.*, 350.
8. *VIZh*, no. 12 (1986): 41.
9. *On the Eve of War*, 388–89.
10. *VIZh*, no. 2 (1992): 22.
11. *VIZh*, no. 1 (1990): 58.
12. Zolotarev, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, December 27, 1990.

Chapter 31

Epigraph: *Field Statute of the Red Army*, 1939, article 6.

1. Shirokorad, *Ships and Cutters of the USSR Navy, 1939–1945*, 741–46, 778–82. The most powerful coastal monitors were of the Udarny and Zhelezniakov classes, with 252.5 tons' and 263 tons' displacement and maximum armor of 12 mm and 30 mm, respectively. The Udarny class was armed with two 130-mm B-7 type cannon systems, 2 × 2 45-mm 41K type turrets, and 4 × 4 7.62-mm M-4 machine gun systems. The Zhelezniakov class was armed with: 2 × 1 102/45-mm B-18 type turrets, 2 × 1 45/46-mm 41K type turrets, 1 × 4 7.62-mm M-4 machine guns, and four 7.62-mm M-1 machine guns.
2. Shirokorad, *Ships and Cutters of the USSR Navy, 1939–1945*, 778–88; *The Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945: Encyclopedia*, 255; A. Vakhmut, “First Days of War on the Danube,” *VIZh*, no. 9 (1970). The Danube flotilla also included a special rifle company, the 17th Machine Gun Company, the 46th Special Anti-aircraft Artillery Battalion, a Danube shore defense sector consisting of six batteries of different calibers, and the 96th Fighter Squadron.
3. Stalin's political report speech to the Central Committee of VKP 9(b) during the Twenty-fifth Congress of the Communist Party, on December 3, 1927.
4. *The Year 1941*, 1: 377. Hitler expressed himself most clearly and completely in the course of his meeting with Molotov on November 13, 1940.
5. You can find the full text of this document in the book *Russian Archive, Great Patriotic General Headquarters: Documents and Materials, 1941* (Moscow: Terra, 1996), 16: 56–57, “HQ Directive #00226 to the Southern Front Commander, to counterstrike and reinforce defenses on the Prut River.” To be precise, it was Directive #00226 from the General Headquarters. Stalin was a member of Headquarters, and General Timoshenko was the chairman. Directive #00226 was signed by Zhukov. Stalin, of course, was the real head of the Headquarters.
6. Zhukov, *Memoirs and Reflections*, 225.
7. Shirokorad, *Ships and Cutters of the USSR Navy, 1939–1945*, 741–56.
8. The construction of the Dnepr-Bug canal started back in 1775. After ten years, this artificial waterway was officially commissioned as the Royal Canal; then it was abandoned. The restoration of the canal started in 1837, with the main work conducted in 1846–48. From 1851, the canal served as the shortest route between Eastern Europe and the Rhine-Atlantic waterway system. In 1918 and 1920, it was completely abandoned once again. In 1940, the canal was restored and rebuilt: its dimensions were brought to a level acceptable to the river-sea class combined navigation vessels. The total length of the canal was combined from the channeled part of the Pina River (74 km), the canal waterway (58 km), and the channeled part of the Mukhavets River (64 km).
9. *VIZh*, no. 7 (1984): 68.
10. A. V. Basov, *The Navy in the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945* (Moscow: Nauka, 1980), 138.
11. I. I. Azarov, *Odessa under Siege* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1962), 3–8.

Chapter 32

Epigraph: Voennyi Vestnik, no. 4 (1940): 76–77.

1. Meltiukhov, *Stalin's Missed Opportunity*, 535.
2. *VIZh*.
3. *VIZh*, no. 10 (1972): 83.
4. Meltiukhov, *Stalin's Missed Opportunity*.
5. In accordance with Soviet military theory, a special designation was assigned to the armies that were reinforced and intended for rapid advance in the main strategic direction. This designation only appeared in Soviet military nomenclature in 1930 and was internal. In 1941, the designation became open and was used in identifying armies. Although the 9th Army was not officially called “Shock,” it was equally equipped, staffed, and trained to qualify as a “shock” army. See note for chapter 21.
6. On September 16, 1939, the Cavalry Army Group of the Kiev Special Military District (under the command of II-degree *Komandarm* I. V. Tiulenev) was renamed the Kamenets-Podolsk Group; on September 20 it was rechristened as the Southern Group, and starting September 24 it became the 12th Army.
7. *Soviet Military Encyclopedia*, 8: 181.
8. Marshal I. Bagramian, *VIZh*, no. 1 (1967): 54.
9. Zhukov, *Memoirs and Reflections*, 224.
10. *The Year 1941*, 2: 104–6. The Central Committee of the VKP (b) and the Council of People's Commissars Decree, “Regarding creation of new units of the Red Army # 1112-459cc” of April 23, 1941, Paragraph 2-B: “Convert 10 Rifle Divisions into Mountain Rifle Divisions.”
11. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, November 1, 1986.
12. See for example Lieutenant-General Bagrat Arushunyan, *VIZh*, no. 6 (1973): 61.
13. *VIZh*, no. 1 (1976): 55.

Chapter 33

Epigraph: Soviet-Nazi Relations, 1939: Documents and Materials on the Soviet-German Relations in April–September 1939 (Paris and New York: Tretia Volna, 1983), 326.

1. *Stalin's Politburo in the 1930s: A Collection of Documents* (Moscow: AIRO-XX, 1995), Document #17; *Izvestia*, May 7, 1941. Until recently it was widely assumed that it happened on May 6, when the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued a decree regarding the appointment of Joseph I. Stalin as the Chairman of the People's Commissars Council. However, the appropriate decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the VKP (b) was made on May 4. Stalin's appointment as the Chief of Government was justified in this top-secret decision by the “tense present-day international situation.” In the non-classified section of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR Decree concerning Stalin's appointment there was no justification for it—Stalin simply filled a vacant position. According to the Presidium's Decree, Molotov was relieved of his duty as chairman of the People's Commissars Council because he repeatedly complained about the difficulty of combining two positions—that of the Chief of Government and the Foreign Affairs People's Commissar.
2. *VIZh*, no. 9 (1965): 66.
3. A. Avtorkhanov, *The Mystery of Stalin's Death* (Frankfurt: Possev, 1976), 132.
4. I. Bagramian, *This Is How the War Began* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1971), 62. The explanation offered by Marshal of the Soviet Union Ivan Bagramian completely matches the opinion of Soviet historians: “In May the international situation remained tense. The Soviet Union was preparing to rebut. This is exactly how we in the military district HQ had interpreted Stalin's appointment as the Chairman of the People's Commissars Council.
5. *Pravda*, May 6, 1941.
6. Russian Center for Storing and Studying Documents of Recent History, Fund 558, Index 1, Document 3808, Sheet 12.
7. Eduard Muratov, *Six Hours with Stalin at a Reception in the Kremlin* (St. Petersburg: Neva), no. 7 (1993): 285.
8. Stalin, report from March 10, 1939, at the Eighteenth Communist Party Congress.
9. *Pravda*, September 18, 1939.

10. *Pravda*, September 18, 1939.
11. *Pravda*, August 19, 1940.
12. *Pravda*, December 25, 1939.
13. *Pravda*, May 6, 1941, front-page article.

Chapter 34

Epigraph: Conquest, The Great Terror, 129.

1. *VIZh*, no. 6 (1995): 6.
2. Central Archive of the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, Fund 16, Index 2951, Case 261, Sheets 20–21.
3. Bagramian, *This Is How the War Began*, 64.
4. *Ibid.*, 77.
5. I. I. Liudovnikov, *Across Storms: An Autobiographical Sketch* (Donetsk, Ukraine: Donbass, 1973), 24.
6. Moskalenko, *In the Southwestern Direction*, 19.
7. *Kievsky Krasnoznamennyi: History of the Krasnoznamennyi Kiev Military District, 1919–1972*, 162.
8. Zhukov, *Memoirs and Reflections*, 242.
9. K. K. Rokossovsky, *A Soldier's Duty* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1997), 8.
10. Central Archive of the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, Fund 16, Index 2951, Case 261, Sheets 20–21.
11. *VIZh*, no. 1 (1967): 62.
12. Central Archive of the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, Fund 16, Index 2951, Case 406, Sheets 109–19.
13. *Transport in the Great Patriotic War, 1941–45* (Moscow: Nauka, 1981), 41.
14. Central Archive of the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, Fund 208, Index 2511, Case 20, Sheet 128.
15. A. A. Lobachev, *Arduous Roads* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1960), 123.
16. *VIZh*, no. 4 (1978): 86.
17. Central Archive of the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, Fund 48, Index 3408, Case 14, Sheets 442–44.
18. *Soviet Military Encyclopedia*, 6: 517.
19. *VIZh*, no. 9 (1960): 56.
20. Sandalov, *The Bygone*, 71.
21. Meretskov, *In Service to the People*, 204.
22. *VIZh*, no. 6 (1961): 6.
23. *Voprosy Istorii* [Questions of History], no. 5 (1970): 45.
24. A. I. Eremenko, *In the Beginning of War* (Moscow: Nauka, 1964), 109.
25. V. F. Zotov, in *On the Northwestern Front, 1941–1943*, ed. P. A. Zhilin (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), 172.
26. S. F. Khvalev, in *On the Northwestern Front, 1941–1943*, 310.
27. *VIZh*, no. 6 (1986): 75.
28. P. P. Poluboyarov, in *On the Northwestern Front, 1941–1943*, 114.
29. I. A. Khizenko, *The Pages that Came Alive: Diary of a Political Officer of the 80th Lenin Rifle Division* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1963), 5.
30. Major General Vasiliy Ivanovich Prokhorov was commander of the 80th Rifle Division of the 37th Rifle Regiment.
31. I. I. Fediuninskiy, *Called up to Alarm* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1964), 12.
32. A. Grylev, V. Khvostov, *Communist*, no. 12 (1968): 68.
33. *VIZh*, no. 4 (1961): 80.
34. *Krasnoznamennyi Uralsky: History of the Ural Military District* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1983), 104.
35. Serghei M. Shtemenko, *The Soviet General Staff at War, 1941–1945* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968), 30.
36. S. P. Ivanov, *The Early Stage of the War* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), 211.
37. G. D. Plaskov, *Artillery Thunder* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), 125.
38. Ozerov, *Tupolev's Sharaga*, 90.
39. *Krasnoznamennyi Byelorussian Military District* (Minsk: Belarus, 1973), 88.

40. *Estonian People in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union, 1941–1945* (Tallinn: Eesti raamat, 1973), 1: 43.
41. Ibid.
42. L. M. Sandalov, *On the Moscow Direction* (Moscow: Nauka, 1970), 63.
43. V. A. Anfilov, *The Path that Led to the Tragedy of 1941* (Moscow: Akopov, 1997), 219–20.
44. *Command and HQ of the Soviet Army in the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945*, ed. M.N. Kozhevnikov, (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), 41.
45. *VIZh*, no. 1 (1969): 61.
46. *Battle for Leningrad, 1941–1944* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1964), 22.
47. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, April 28, 1985.
48. G. A. Kumanev, *Soviet Railroad Personnel during the Years of the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945* (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1963), 36.
49. *VIZh*, no. 5 (1980): 71.
50. *The Rear of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1977), 59.
51. Ibid., 173.
52. I. V. Boldin, *The Pages of My Life* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1961), 92.
53. S.P. Ivanov, *The Early Stage of the War*, 211.
54. *VIZh*, no. 9 (1960): 56.
55. *VIZh*, no. 6 (1962): 77.
56. *VIZh*, no. 9 (1966): 66.
57. M. I. Kazakov, *Reflections over Maps of Former Battlefields* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1971), 64.

Chapter 35

1. *The Year 1941*, 2: 112.
2. Ibid., 2: 151.
3. *It Must Be Published*, 167.
4. Yakovlev, *Life's Task*, 252.
5. “High-frequency lines”: Encoded communication equipment.
6. *Voprosy Istorii* [Questions of History], no. 5 (1970): 42.
7. Vassilevsky, *Life's Mission*, 119.
8. These seven armies were (RC is rifle corps, MC is mechanized corps, RD is rifle division, TD is tank division): the 16th Army (32nd RC, 5th MC, 57th TD), the 19th Army (25th and 34th RC—the latter had five divisions, 26th MC, 38th RD), the 20th Army (61st and 69th RC, 7th MC, 18th RD), the 21st Army (63rd and 66th RC, 25th MC), the 22nd Army (51st and 62nd RC), the 24th Army (52nd and 53rd RC, 23rd MC), and the 28th Army (30th and 33rd RC, 69th MC).
9. V. Khvostov and Major General A. Grylov, *Communist*, no. 12 (1968): 68.
10. *History of the Second World War, 1939–1945*, 3: 352.

Chapter 36

1. *History of the Second World War, 1939–1945*, 4: 27.
2. *Krasnoznamennyy Byelorussian Military District* (Minsk: Belarus, 1973), 84.
3. Sandalov, *On Moscow Direction*, 41.
4. Ibid.
5. “On the Eve of the War: Documents of the Conference of the Supreme Command of the Red Army, December 23–31, 1940,” in *The Russian Archive: the Great Patriotic War* (Moscow: Terra, 1993), 12: 1: 34.
6. Ibid., 12: 1: 40–41.
7. I. Bagramian, *VIZh*, no. 1 (1976): 62.
8. Moskalenko, *In the Southwestern Direction*, 18.
9. *VIZh*, no. 4 (1984): 42.
10. V. Sikorsky, *The Future War* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1936), 240.

11. *Voyna I Revoliutsia* [War and Revolution], no. 8 (1931): 11.
12. *The Rear of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945*, 33.
13. *VIZh*, no. 12 (1972): 46.
14. *VIZh*, no. 10 (1971): 13.
15. Ivanov, *The Early Stage of the War*, 206.
16. S. A. Kalinin, *Reflections on the Past* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1963), 124.
17. *VIZh*, no. 7 (1979): 43.
18. Stalin, *Collected Works*, 5: 225.
19. F. A. Kalinin, *Thoughts about the Past* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1963), 182.
20. The ChK (*Chrezvychainaia Comissia*, or Extraordinary Commission) was a precursor of the NKVD. “Chekist” to this day means a member of the political police.

Chapter 37

Epigraph: Liddell Hart, *Strategy: The Indirect Approach*, 336.

1. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, October 27, 1992.
2. Makhmut Gareev, in the collection of articles titled *Courage* (Moscow, 1991), 253.
3. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, July 27, 1991.

Chapter 38

Epigraph: F. Chuev, *Molotov*, 48.

1. Nikolai G. Kuznetsov, *On the Eve of . . .* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1966), 321.
2. Peter Chamberlain and Chris Ellis, *British and American Tanks of World War II* (New York: ARCO, 1969), 66.
3. Winston Churchill, *The Second World War* (Moscow: Terra, 1998), 3: 80. The losses of the British merchant and navy fleets (in imperial tons, where 1 imperial ton is equal to 1.016 metric ton) were as follows: January—320,000, February—402,000, March—537,000, April—654,000, May—500,000, June—431,000.
4. *Foreign Affairs Documents, 1940–22 June 1941*, 21: 2: 739. A warning about a possible German attack came from the British government only on June 16, 1941. British ambassador Cripps was not in Moscow and the warning about the possible German invasion was handed to the Soviet ambassador in London, Maisky, who immediately transmitted the message to Molotov in Moscow. Here is the beginning of this quite long message: “Today, Cadogan, upon Eden’s directive, provided me with more detailed information about the concentration of German troops at the Soviet border. . . . Total number of German troops presently concentrated at the Soviet borders, according to British General Headquarters data, is eighty divisions in Poland, thirty in Romania, and five in Finland and northern Norway, total 115 divisions, not counting the mobilized Romanian army.” Further on, there was a detailed description of which German troops were at the border, and when and where they went. One notices the outstanding work of British intelligence, which reported absolutely precise data about the German invasion army. Now we know that by June 22, 1941, 125 divisions and two brigades were deployed in the first strategic echelon of the German invading army, in other words, along the Soviet borders. By mid-June, most likely, there were 115 divisions, as the message reported. Stalin did not believe this message, since all previous messages gave him reasons for doubt. Most importantly, however, Stalin, at that time, had his own plans for Germany.
5. Liddell Hart, *The Second World War*, 151.
6. L. Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London: HMSO, 1971–76), 611.

Chapter 39

Epigraph: Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, part 1, chapter VII, 164.

1. *Soviet Military Encyclopedia*, 5: 343.
2. Halder, War Diary, 2.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Muller-Hillebrand, *German Ground Forces, 1933–1945*, 2: 144.

5. Ibid., 267.
6. Liddell Hart, *The Second World War*, 152–53.
7. Ibid., 158.
8. *The Wehrmacht's Fateful Decisions*, 328.
9. Robert Goralski, *World War II Almanac* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1981), 164.
10. *History of the Second World War, 1939–1945*, 3: 328.
11. Rendulic, *Commanding the Troops*, 60.
12. *Der Spiegel*, no. 6 (1996): 100–101.
13. Shirokorad, *The Genius of the Soviet Artillery*, 169–70.
14. Ibid., 169.

Chapter 40

1. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, December 23, 1989.
2. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, October 1, 1987.
3. *VIZh*, no. 4 (1992): 30.
4. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, August 21, 1986.
5. Ibid.
6. P. Stefanovsky, *Three Hundred Unknowns* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968), 206.
7. *VIZh*, no. 6 (1976): 62.
8. *Ogonek*, no. 17 (1965).
9. *Comsomol'skaya Pravda*, October 8, 1968.
10. *The Year 1941*, 1: 780.
11. *VIZh*, no. 6 (1966): 8.
12. Hermann Hoth, *Tank Operations* (Smolensk, Russia: Rusich, 1999), 34.
13. Guderian, *A Soldier's Memoirs*, 191.
14. Blumentritt, *The Wehrmacht's Fateful Decisions*, 76.

Chapter 41

Epigraph: Hitler's radio address on the occasion of launching the Winter Assistance campaign on October 3, 1941.

1. G. N. Zakharov, *The Fighters' Story* (Moscow: DOSAAF, 1977), 43.
2. Hans-Ulrich Rudel, "Stuka Pilot," in *Bombs Away!* (Moscow: AST, 2002), 30, 35.
3. Anfilov, *The Immortal Feat of Arms*, 517.
4. *History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union, 1941–1945* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1960–65), 1: 441.
5. Major General M. Gretsov, *VIZh*, no. 9 (1965): 84.
6. Basov, *The Navy in the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945*, 117.
7. Order of the commander of the Baltic fleet, from June 22, 1941.
8. *Soviet Military Encyclopedia*, 8: 356.
9. M. Solonin, *June 25: Stupidity or Aggression?* (Moscow: Yauza-EXMO, 2008), 442.
10. Ibid., 443.
11. A. B. Shirokorad, *Russia's Northern Wars* (Moscow: AST; Minsk: Harvest, 2001), 702.
12. *The Battle for the Soviet Baltic* (Tallinn, Estonia: Eesti raamat, 1980), 67.
13. Central Archive of the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, Fund 181, Index 1631, Case 1, Sheet 128.
14. *VIZh*, no. 5 (1986): 49.
15. Piker, *Hitler's Table Talks*, 303.
16. *Otechestvennaya Istoria* [History of the Motherland], no. 4 (1993): 26.
17. *Petermanns geographischen Mitteilungen* (Germany, 1943), vols. 9, 10.
18. *VIZh*, no. 10 (1992): 82.
19. *VIZh*, no. 12 (1970): 22.
20. *Literaturnaya Gazeta* [Literary Gazette], August 20, 2002.
21. A. B. Zubov, *Continent*, no. 84 (1995).

Chapter 42

Epigraph: Winston Churchill, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons Official Report, September 8, 1942.

1. Anastas I. Mikoyan, *The Way It Was: Reflections on the Past* (Moscow: Vagrius, 1999), 380.
2. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Part 2, Ch. XIII, 542.
3. Mikoyan, *The Way It Was*, 391.

Chapter 43

Epigraph: Hoth, *Panzer Operations*, 163.

1. *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* [New Russian Word], May 20, 1990.
2. *Ibid.*, 95.
3. Halder, *War Diary*, 3: 259–60.
4. *Ibid.*, 263.
5. *Ibid.*, 297–98.
6. *Ibid.*, 328.
7. *VIZh*, no. 7 (1991): 9.
8. Halder, *War Diary*, 3: 344.
9. Piker, *Hitler's Table Talks*, 331.
10. *Ibid.*, 332.
11. *Ibid.*, 173.

Chapter 44

Epigraph: Vladimir I. Lenin, *The Military Program of the Proletarian Revolution* (Zurich: Jugend-Internationale, 1917), vols. 9, 10.

1. G. A. Deborin, *The Second World War* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1958), 108.
2. *International Policy of the USSR: A Compilation of Documents*, 4: 550.
3. *History of the Second World War, 1939–1945*, 3: 274.
4. *Admissions and Revelations*, 266.
5. *History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union, 1941–1945*, 1: 400.
6. *History of the Second World War, 1939–1945*, 3: 355.
7. Y. Gal'perin, "The Third Front," *Vesti*, June 19, 1997.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Correspondence of the Chairman of Council of Ministers of the USSR with the President of the USA and the Prime Minister of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1989), 2: 49.
10. Joseph V. Stalin, *On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1947), 166.
11. *VIZh*, no. 10 (1975): 60; Vassilevsky, *Life's Mission*, 499.
12. Vassilevsky, *Life's Mission*, 502.
13. *Soviet Military Encyclopedia*, 2: 27.
14. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, March 16, 2000.
15. Vassilevsky, *Life's Mission*, 502.
16. Central Archive of the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, Fund 326, Index 5047, Case 701, Sheets 1–99.
17. *Ibid.*, Fund 14-A, Index 272, Case 19, Sheets 5–20.
18. *Ibid.*, Fund 35, Index 11287, Case 1417, Sheet 134.
19. *Ibid.*, Fund 6 BAC (Bomber Aviation Corps, Index 541971, Case 1, Sheets 1–4; Fund 7 BAC, Index 555981, Case 1, Sheets 1–3).
20. *VIZh*, no. 8 (1985): 16.
21. *The USSR's Victory in the War with Militarist Japan and Post-war Development of Eastern and South-Eastern Asia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), 47.
22. *VIZh*, no. 38 (1985): 43.
23. *Ibid.*, 44.
24. Vassilevsky, *Life's Mission*, 507.

25. *History of the Second World War, 1939–1945*, 11: 197.
26. *Ibid.*, 11: 196.
27. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 26, 2000.
28. *VIZh*, no. 8 (1985): 16.
29. *History of the Second World War, 1939–1945*, 11: 195.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*, 196.
32. Central Archive of the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, Fund 210, Index 3116, Case 294, Sheet 70.
33. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, August 5, 1995.
34. *VIZh*, no. 6 (1986): 18.
35. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 1, 2000.
36. *Suddenness in Offensive Operations of the Great Patriotic War* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), 51.
37. *VIZh*, no. 8 (1975): 19.
38. *VIZh*, no. 8 (1971): 68.
39. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 26, 2000.
40. Declaration of the Soviet leadership on August 8, 1945.
41. General I. Tretyak, *VIZh*, no. 8 (1985): 12.
42. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 26, 2000.
43. Ivanov, *The Beginning Period of the War*, 281.
44. Colonel A. S. Savin, *VIZh*, no. 8 (1985): 56.
45. *Communist*, no. 12 (1985): 85
46. Joseph Stalin, speech at the Eighteenth Communist Party Congress, March 10, 1939.
47. *Soviet Tank Troops, 1941–1945* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1973), 308.
48. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, August 5, 1995.
49. Von Mellentin, *Tank Battles, 1939–1945* (St. Petersburg: Poligon, 1998), 249.
50. *VIZh*, no. 8 (1975): 25.
51. *VIZh*, no. 38 (1985): 45.
52. *VIZh*, no. 10 (1975): 70, 73.
53. *Soviet Military Encyclopedia*, 2: 27.

Conclusion

Epigraph: Nikita Khrushchev, at a Kremlin reception for foreign diplomats and journalists, November 1956.

1. *The Year 1941*, 1: 377.
2. *Ibid.*, 383.
3. Formally, besides the USSR, two more countries expanded their borders as a result of World War II: Yugoslavia and Poland. Yugoslavia got a significant chunk of land—practically the whole Istria (with the exception of Trieste), and Zadar (Zara). Poland's borders moved westward, while a wide swath of Polish territory in the east was seized by the USSR. The size of the territory Poland acquired in the west is quite comparable to that lost in the east. On the other hand, in 1945 both Poland and Yugoslavia were loyal satellites of the Soviet Union. It was expected that in the near future both nations would become a part of the USSR. Thus, one way or another, in terms of territorial expansion, Stalin benefited from World War II.
4. *The Soviet Union on the International Conferences during the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945*, vol. 6, “Berlin (Potsdam) Conference of the Three Leaders of the Allied Powers—USSR, USA, and Great Britain (July 17–August 2, 1945)” (Moscow: Politizdat, 1984), 131–34, 310–11.
5. *Ibid.*, 149.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, April 27, 2002.
8. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, December 22, 1999.

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About the Author

Viktor Suvorov is the pen name of Vladimir Rezun, 61, who was born in the USSR. Suvorov is the author of eighteen books, including three works of fiction. His books have been published in more than thirty languages. In Russia and Poland they have sold more than a million copies. Suvorov was a Soviet Army officer who served in military intelligence (GRU). In 1978, when stationed in Geneva under cover as a Soviet diplomat, he defected with his wife and two young children to the United Kingdom, where he worked as an intelligence analyst and lecturer. He lives in hiding in England because he was sentenced to death by a Soviet military court, and today's Russia has refused to pardon him.

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Wednesday, January 30, 2008

[WW2 Operation Barbarossa 1941 - the Real History version](#)

The trouble with historians is that they concentrate exclusively on the question of *what* happened, and never on the *why* it happened. This goes with a territory - that is what being a historian is all about; a sort of a journalist of the past, reporting the news as they happened, and not as they happen.

This leads to a problem, however.

Some facts get obscured by others, in effect they become forgotten, and so an unclear, muddled picture of the past emerges. Many historians, some because they are ordered to by their government, others because of nationalism, are inherently biased, and so pick and choose the reported facts. Many times, the original documents are missing, or kept stored in secret safes, never to be seen by the world's public as they would embarrass the country...

So a kind of a dogma, almost a religious cult, with all the heated passions, springs up about historical issues. Especially if it involves your country, which is pure as the driven snow, and would never, ever do bad (exception - if you lose the war, you are fucked, as it is commonly known that "the victors write the history books").

And so it was that the narrative, the evil Nazi Germany invaded the peaceful, innocent Soviet Union in World War 2 took hold.

Enter [Icebreaker by Viktor Suvorov](#).

In 1939, due to Stalin's political maneuvering, Hitler is made to act the part of the "Icebreaker of the Revolution", and entangles Europe (and the world) in a global, terrifying war. The Soviet Union is officially not involved.

In 1941, Soviet Union was finishing a gigantic national mobilization, and getting ready to attack its then ally, Hitler's Nazi Germany (and German allies).

Lets look at the history in some detail.

The revolution in 1917 which happened in Tsarist Russia, overthrew the Tsar put the Bolshevik party in power. The Bolsheviks were communists - the followers of the theoretical ramblings of Marx and Engels (German philosophers), advocating a "socioeconomic structure that promotes the establishment of a classless, stateless society based on common

ownership of the means of production" ([Wikipedia Communism entry](#)).

"Will it be possible for this revolution to take place in one country alone? No." - Friedrich Engels, *The Principles of Communism*, 1847

The Bolsheviks faithfully followed Marx and Engels' teachings on the need to change the world from the capitalist system into the communist one. Effectively, this meant a declaration of war by the Soviet Union against all non-communist countries in the world, to change their system of government.

"The bourgeoisie still rules over much of the world and so most Communist Parties and also the Communist International as the united party of the world revolutionary proletariat have to fight it." [Communist 3rd Congress: The Organisational Structure of the Communist Parties, the Methods and Content of Their Work, 1920](#).

The Third Communist Congress quotes:

"Before the revolution, and even after it, we thought: either revolution breaks out in the other countries, in the capitalistically more developed countries, immediately, or at least very quickly, or we must perish. In spite of this conviction, we did all we possibly could to preserve the Soviet system under all circumstances, come what may, **because we knew that we were not only working for ourselves, but also for the international revolution**" [1921, 3rd Congress theses](#)

"We Marxists do not belong to that category of people who are unqualified opponents of all war. We say: our aim is to achieve a socialist system of society, which, by eliminating the division of mankind into classes, by eliminating all exploitation of man by man and nation by nation, will inevitably eliminate the very possibility of war."

[Article in Pravda No. 93, written by Lenin](#)

The Bolshevik, later called the Communist Party of the Soviet Union - they saw themselves as the vanguard of the world revolution, because that was its *raison d'être* (its reason for existence): from [worldrevolution.org.uk](#): "Lenin stressed, as Karl Marx had done before him, that in order for Socialism to succeed, capitalists would need to be overthrown in several advanced countries too. He took the lead in organising a new world revolutionary party, the Communist (Third) International in 1919 after the betrayal of the Socialist (Second) International. The Third International bound revolutionary parties from all over the world in a common fight to repeat the successes of October 1917 and open the road to world socialism."

After Lenin came Stalin. And an abrupt change happened in the Soviet Union's policies.

[From the Wikipedia:](#) "Socialism in One Country was a thesis developed by Nikolai Bukharin in 1925 and adopted as state policy by Joseph Stalin. The thesis held that given the defeat of all communist revolutions in Europe from 1917–1921 except in Russia, the Soviet Union should begin to strengthen itself internally".

So, all the revolutions that sparked up in European countries in the 1920's were defeated. Again, same article: **"This theory was in an opposition to Lenin's beliefs that while a revolution may happen in one country, the final success of socialism in one country, especially in such a backward one as Russia, is impossible without proletarian revolutions in other, advanced countries of Western Europe"**.

So at first glance we have Stalin paying put to all talk of world revolution, and concentrating on internal national problems in the Soviet Union.

Seemingly.

I am a big fan of taking a look at what a politician is doing, as opposed to what he is saying (The old adage of "When do you know a politician is lying? When his lips are moving!"). So let's take a look at what was happening in the Soviet Union when Stalin ruled it with an iron hand. Lets...

1928: Stalin overturns the Lenin policy of the capitalism lite New Economic Program (NEP - google it yourself). In [this speech in 1928](#), Stalin explains himself: "The independence of our country cannot be upheld unless we have an adequate industrial basis for defence. And such an industrial basis cannot be created if our industry is not more highly developed technically".

What this lead to in practice, was that all the national resources went into heavy industry, such as iron mills, factories and the like. This left the ordinary people genuinely fucked. For example, the peasants experienced the joys of Collectivisation, which is a fancy word for the communist government thugs taking private farms away and putting all peasants into government run farms. And establishing quotas of grain and wheat production.

Failure to produce said quotas resulted in executions, and the policy itself resulted in mass starvation and cases of cannibalism. According to Robert Conquest in his book *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivisation and the Terror-Famine*, this policy resulted in 7 million deaths.

Effectively then, Collectivisation was modern day work slavery, similar to American South exploitation of blacks. The policy itself resulted in millions of victims. This is a good [webpage primer on the reality of communist rule](#)

. For a good scholarly study, read the preview of [The Economic Transformation of the Soviet Union by Davis, Harrison and Wheatcroft](#). Highly recommended, and free to you online.

But the policy itself was successful. It made the Soviet Union into an economic powerhouse, despite the millions of dead, starving or resettled victims in the Gulags. This was observed by (then) Colonel Heinz Guderian, as he visited the Kharkov Tank Factory in 1933 (the two socialist countries, Germany and Russia, were allies back then): it produced 22 tanks per day. This is pretty staggering, as Germany entered WW2 with just 3195 tanks... Or about 159 days of just one Soviet factory production. This is taken directly from Icebreaker and [Defense conversion Strategies by NATO ASI series](#).

By my standards, Stalin's industrialization was successful - it accomplished its goals to make the country into a modern military power. 22 tank produced per day in just one factory in one city... in 1933.

I will pause here and let you think on that for a second. Take a deep breath.

Ready? Moving on now...

Before there was WW2, there was the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Read up the [bullshit version on Wikipedia](#), ponder them, and then come back here.

"For a long time, the primary motive of Stalin's sudden change of course was assumed to be the fear of German aggressive intentions." That was before Suvorov's Icebreaker book came out, that is.

First fact: Hitler's Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union attacked Poland together in 1939, as they agreed to in the pact. You can see some pictures of German and Soviet soldiers yukking it up in 1939 in Poland [here](#) and the actual documentary film [here](#) - the second link is recommended.

Second fact: Despite the Soviet Union being an ally of Hitler, and invading Poland together with Germany, the French and UK governments only declared war on Germany in 1939. They did not declare war on the second aggressor and Nazi ally, the Soviet Union...

I will let you think on that for a second. Take a deep breath, exhale...

OK, moving on.

So, to sum up the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact - Western Europe was at war with Nazi Germany, while the Soviet Union stayed aloof from the fracas. They were at peace.

But that is not the whole picture, far from the truth at all about that period of WW2. While Germany annexed the western part of Poland, the Soviet Union took over [the eastern part, totaling 201,015 km² and a population of 13.299 million.](#)

Hardly the action of a peace loving country.

In early 1940, Germany invaded Denmark and Norway. The peaceful and not involved in the raging world war Soviet Union, took over [Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.](#)

What we see here are actions of two allies, two predators, two animals of the same ilk. But in popular WW2 schoolbook history, we somehow learn only about how Hitler's Germany was the evil country and the sole source of WW2. The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact is explained as a play for time, to buy time to prepare by the Soviet Union for the inevitable German invasion.

I hope that the previous list of Soviet (and German) aggressions persuaded you that that view of WW2 history is bullshit.

If not, I will let Suvorov explain it all again:

In September 1939, the Soviet Union declared itself neutral and, during the 'pre-war period', seized territories with populations totalling 23 million people - not bad going for a neutral state.

The Red Army and the NKVD perpetrated fearful crimes in these captured territories. Soviet concentration camps were crammed with imprisoned soldiers and officers from a number of European countries. Officer prisoners, and not only the Poles, were shot in their thousands. This is not the action of a neutral state.

Here is a strange state of affairs. Germany attacked Poland, which means that Germany was the instigator of, and participant in, the European and then the World War. The Soviet Union did the same thing in the same month, but it does not judge itself to have been an instigator of the war. Nor does it consider itself even to have then been a participant in the war.

A Polish soldier killed in battle on Polish territory against the Red Army is considered a participant in World War II, as well as its victim, while the Soviet soldier who killed him is regarded as 'neutral'. If in the same battle a Soviet soldier is killed, then it is judged that he has been killed not in wartime but in peacetime - in the 'pre-war period'.

To further set the stage, I will let Suvorov quote Pravda articles from these days when Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union were allies: The foundations of the earth are trembling,' it wrote. 'The ground slips from under the feet of peoples and nations. Glows are afire in the sky and the thunder of guns shakes seas and continents. Powers and states are blown away just like chaff in the wind. How excellent it is, how extraordinarily wonderful, when the world is shaken to its very foundations, when powers perish and greatness falls.' (Pravda, 4 August 1940) 'Every such war brings us closer to that happy time when murders among the people will no longer happen. (Pravda, 18 August 1940)

The Soviet newspaper article writers were bursting with unbridled joy and happiness that the capitalists are killing each other.

The Soviet general Krivoshein, who in 1939 took part in the Nazi-Soviet victory parade in Brest, Poland, had this to say: "We have concluded a treaty with the Germans', he said, 'but this means nothing. Now is the most wonderful time to solve all world problems once and for all, and in a constructive way.' (Ratnaya ByV, Molodaya Gvardiya, 1962, p. 8)"

"Divide our enemies, meet the demands of each of them temporarily and then destroy them one at a time, giving them no opportunity to unite. (Pravda, 4 March 1941)"

This is what the outlook was of the hapless, unprepared for war Soviet Union, just trembling and cowering before the might of the mighty Wehrmacht.

I will pause again and let you process this information. Go to the restroom, grab a drink, make some popcorn, get some cookies... Ready?

Suvorov uses those two most dangerous weapons of all, *logic and common sense*.

He calmly states that, if the Soviet Union was interested in protecting its national territory, it would have kept Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia as buffer states, and warned Germany not to invade them. After all (using that dangerous common sense again) it would be very hard for Germany to invade the Soviet Union if they did not have a common border!

The apologists for the Soviet Union claim that the attack on Finland, the annexation of the Baltic countries (Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia) was all done to protect the Soviet Union. That is a strange, weird il-logic - I do not think that if any other country attacked and took over another country, and then claimed it was for self defense, that that argument would work.

But this is the Soviet Union's history, and that argument is discussed and agreed upon in serious scholarly books and articles.

Suvorov then continues with his second logic and common sense attack on the biggest historical lie of WW2 (second only to Pearl Harbor - that blog post upcoming). Having gotten a common border with Germany, what should have happened is that the Soviet Army should have built their own version of the Maginot Line - it should have mined the bridges on the border, built bunkers, tank traps, machine gun nests, etc etc.

Suvorov explains:

A country which is preparing its defence deploys its army deep inside its own territory, and not on its very frontier. The object is to prevent the enemy from destroying the main defending forces with one surprise attack. A defending side will normally build a security zone in the frontier areas in plenty of time; a zone where the terrain has been saturated with traps, engineered defences, obstacles and minefields. The defending side will deliberately avoid constructing anything related to industry or transport in this zone; nor will it keep any heavy military formations or large quantities of supplies there. On the contrary, timely preparations will have been made to blow up all bridges, tunnels and roads in this zone.

Once inside the security zone, the aggressor loses speed of movement, and his troops sustain losses before they even encounter the main forces of the defender. Only small but highly mobile detachments of the defending side operate in the security zone. These detachments spring ambushes, launch surprise attacks and then quickly withdraw to previously prepared positions. Light detachments create the impression that

they are the main force, compelling the aggressor to stop, deploy his forces and waste his shells on areas where there is nothing to hit. The light detachments, meanwhile, secretly withdraw to prepare new ambushes.

While the aggressor is waging an exhausting battle with the light detachments of the covering force, the main defending forces have time to prepare themselves to confront the aggressor from positions which favour defence.

So how does that work in practice, Mr. Suvorov?

(...)the Red Army itself created strong security zones on its own frontiers, particularly its western borders. Special government commissions inspected the country's western regions and determined which zones an enemy would find easiest to cross, and which would afford him most difficulty. Teams of bridge-protection guards, trained in demolition work, were made ready to blow up all the bridges in the

western regions. The 60-metre long railway bridge at Olev, for example, could have been blown up by the duplicated explosion system in two and a half minutes. (I. Starinov, *Miny Zhdut Svoego Chasa*, Moscow Voenizdat 1964, p. 24)

Heavy pipe-lines, depots, water pumps, water towers, high embankments and deep cuttings were all prepared to be blown up. (Ibid, p. 18) By the end of 1929, 60 teams of demolition sappers, totalling 1,400 men, had been trained in the Kiev Military District alone. These had at their disposal '1,640 fully prepared sophisticated charges and tens of thousands of safety-fuse detonator sets, which were ready literally for instant use.' (Ibid, p. 22) Similar activity was also going on in other military districts.

In addition to the teams of demolition sappers which had been set up in the western regions of the country, railway-blocking battalions were formed. One of their tasks was to destroy the main railway junctions in the event of a retreat and to create defence obstacles on the main arterial routes by destroying roads and laying delayed-action land mines lest the enemy should try to rebuild the roads. There were four such battalions in the Ukraine in 1932. (Ibid, p. 175)

Railway points crossings, communications equipment, telegraph wires and in some cases even the rails were got ready to be removed. (M. Tukhachevsky, *Izbrannye Proizvedeniya*, Moscow Voenizdat 1964, Vol. i pp. 65-67)

The Soviet security zone underwent continuous improvements. The number of targets prepared for demolition steadily grew. New defence obstacles were created: forest barriers; artificial reservoirs in front of defensive constructions; preparations were even made to flood some areas.

The Soviet Union then declared war on Finland and experienced a security zone on its own attacking troops.

The failures of the Red Army on this occasion were not simply the results of miscalculations by the Soviet command. More important was the fact that the Finnish Army was prepared for defence, and ready to make sacrifices. The Finns had erected their security zone in front of their main line of defence. This zone - some 40-60 kilometres deep (*Sovetskaya Voennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 6, p. 504) - was strewn with minefields and defence obstacles. Snipers, sappers and light mobile detachments were extremely active.

Suvorov continues the narrative:

All the Soviet commanders who fought there expressed their admiration of the Finnish security zone. Foremost among them was K. Meretskov, who commanded the 1st Army. (Na Sluzhbe Narodu, Moscow IPL 1968, p. 184) After he had finally overcome the Finnish security zone and had assessed its worth, Meretskov was appointed Chief of the General Staff. So how did he make use of his experience in order to reinforce the Soviet security zone which had been set up along the Soviet Union's western frontiers?

Meretskov ordered that:

1. The security zone which had previously been constructed along the Soviet Union's western frontiers should be dismantled, the teams of demolition sappers disbanded, the explosive charges removed, the mines rendered harmless, and the defence obstacles razed to the ground;
2. No security zone should be set up in the new lands;
3. The main forces of the Red Army should be moved right up to the frontiers, without a security zone to protect them;
4. The strategic resources of the Red Army should be brought from the heart of the country and concentrated directly on the frontier;
5. A vast works programme should begin at once to build a network of roads and airfields in western Byelorussia and in the western Ukraine: single-lane roads were to be made into dual-lane roads, the capacity of the roads was to be increased; and new roads leading directly to the German border were to be built.

Come again?

That does not plan like a defensive zone to act as a buffer between Germany and the Soviet Union. That sounds like a country that is expecting an invasion of... tourists, not enemy troops. Why was this enormous programme of public works undertaken, why did the Soviet troops move towards the border when the defensive obstacles were "razed to the ground"?

Perhaps Stalin was counting on an already existing fortification, already built. Perhaps... The so called Stalin Line did indeed exist.

In the 1930s, thirteen fortified regions, or URs, were built along the Soviet Union's western frontier, in a strip of territory which was unofficially called the Stalin Line.

The basic element of the fortified regions was the DOT, or permanent fire position. In its issue of 25 February 1983, the newspaper Red Star gave a description of DOT No. 112 in the 53rd UR, situated in the Mogilev-Podolsk region. This was one of the completely standard DOTs in the Stalin Line.

It consisted of complex tunnelled fortification defences, which contained communication trenches, caponiers, compartments and filtration systems.

It also had armouries, ammunition stores, food supplies, a medical unit, a mess room, water supply (which incidentally is still functioning), a recreation and reading room, and observation and command posts. The armament of the DOT consisted of machine-gun positions with three firing embrasures. In these posts there were three 'maxims' mounted on special turrets and two single-gun caponiers with a cannon in each one.

(...)

Colonel-General A. I. Shebunin, another participant in that mighty work of construction, tells us that in the Proskurov UR alone, more than one thousand reinforced concrete defence-works were constructed in just three years.

OK, so there was an already existing "Maginot Line" in the Soviet Union.

Curious thing happened though:

"In Autumn 1939, however, when World War II began and a common frontier with Germany was established, all construction work on the Stalin Line was stopped. (V. Anfilov: Bessmertnyi Podvig, Moscow Nauka 1971, p. 35)"

"The garrisons in the fortified regions of the Stalin Line were first reduced in size and then disbanded completely. Soviet factories stopped producing armament and special equipment destined for fortification installations. The existing fortified regions were dismantled, and their armament, ammunition and all observation, communications and fire-control equipment were put into storage. (VIZH 1961 No. 9, p. 120)"

I do not know how future historians will explain this crime against our people. Present-day historians pass over this event in complete silence, and I do not know why. The Soviet government fleeced its people of many billions of roubles (no less than 120 billion, according to my calculations) in order to build fortifications, impregnable to any enemy, along the entire western frontier, from sea to sea, from the grey Baltic to the azure Black Sea. Yet just before war broke out, in spring 1941, powerful explosions thundered along the 1,200-kilometre-long stretch of fortifications. Strong double and single caponiers built of reinforced concrete, firing positions with one, two and three embrasures, command posts, observation posts, and tens of thousands of permanent defensive installations were all blown up on Stalin's personal orders. (Major-General P. G. Grigorenko, VPodpol'eMozhno Vstretit' Tol'ko Krys, New York 1981, p. 141)

Come again?

Summing up - the old fortification on the old Soviet frontier was dismantled, its troop levels reduced, its armament put into storage. The

new frontier's defense zone was not built to compensate.

Besides, when defending yourself, two Maginot Lines are better than one, so even if you *did* plan to build a new Stalin Line on the new German-Soviet border, why in the world would you destroy the old one?

That common sense and logic again... Dangerous weapons indeed.

Instead of making bunkers and planting mines, the Soviet Army in 1939-1941 was busy training paratroopers. There were 10 Airborne Corps created pre war and during initial days of Barbarossa in 1939-1941 ([quoted figures from soldat.ru forum](#))

In the course of the manoeuvres held in Kiev in 1935, a parachute assault force of 1,200 men was dropped, immediately followed by an air-landed assault force of 2,500 men armed with heavy weaponry including artillery, armoured cars and tanks.

In Byelorussia in 1936, in the course of practising the same offensive theme, a parachute assault force of 1,800 men was dropped. They were followed by an air-landed assault force of 5,700 men armed with heavy weaponry. In the same year, the full complement of the 84th Rifle Division made an air-landed assault in the course of offensive manoeuvres in the Moscow Military Division.

Common sense and logic: paratroopers are not used in defensive, only in an offensive.

Need a break? No? Continuing...

Among the many defensive systems which the Soviet Union possessed was the Dnieper Naval Flotilla.

(...)

The formidable barrier formed by the Dnieper, the bridges ready to be detonated, and the river Flotilla working in cooperation with the field troops, artillery and air force, could have safely barred the way to the industrial regions of the southern Ukraine and the Soviet bases on the Black Sea. The German Blitzkrieg could have been stopped on the river-banks, or at least held up there for several months.

Instead of one defensive flotilla, Stalin then created two new ones, the Danube Flotilla and the Pinsk Flotilla. The Soviet Danube Flotilla was formed before the Soviet Union acquired an outlet to the Danube. In the course of Zhukov's 'liberation campaign' in the Romanian frontier regions, Stalin took Bukovina and Bessarabia from Romania. Right at the mouth of the Danube, a sector of the eastern bank of the river, some dozens of kilometres long, passed into the possession of the Soviet Union. The

Danube Flotilla, which had already been set up in expectation of this event, was moved there immediately

The Danube Naval Flotilla included about 70 naval river vessels and launches, sub-units of the fighter air force, and anti-aircraft and shore artillery. The conditions where the base had to be built were frightful. The Soviet bank of the Danube Delta was barren and exposed. The vessels had to moor at open berths, with Romanian troops sometimes only 300 metres away.

In the event of a defensive war, the entire Danube Flotilla would have fallen into a trap the moment hostilities began. The enemy could simply rake the Soviet vessels with machine-gun fire, preventing them from raising anchor and casting off. In a defensive war, moreover, the Danube Naval Flotilla would have had no useful function. Given its location, there were simply no defensive tasks for it to fulfil. The Danube Delta consists of hundreds of lakes, impassable swamps and hundreds of square kilometres of reed marshes. It is the last place through which an enemy would choose to attack the Soviet Union.

There was only one way to explain the siting of the Danube Flotilla; its purpose was to carry out combat operations upstream while Red Army troops were making a general advance. If you gather 70 river vessels in the delta of a great river, they have nowhere to go except upstream. This meant that they would have to operate on the territory of Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Germany.

The Danube Flotilla was of no use to anyone in a defensive war, and it was condemned to be destroyed immediately in its open moorings on a bank raked by enemy gunfire. In an offensive war, however, the Danube Flotilla would be a mortal danger to Germany. It only had to move 130 kilometres upstream for the strategic bridge at Chernavada to come under fire from its guns. That in its turn would mean that the flow of oil from Ploesti to the port of Constanza would be cut off. Another 200 kilometres upstream and the entire German war machine would come to a halt simply because German tanks, aircraft and submarines would have been left without fuel.

Of course, the apologists for their version of history will tell us that everything that Suvorov writes about the flotilla was defensive in nature.

Which does not explain how, during the first day of the Axis invasion on the Soviet Union,

As soon as they learnt that the war had begun, the Soviet commanders put the finishing touches to their preparations to launch an assault landing operation. The action to be taken by the Soviet Flotilla commanders, and also by the commanders of the 14th Rifle Corps, whose divisions were

concentrated in the Danube Delta area, and by the commanders of the 79th Frontier Detachment of the NKVD, had been previously planned and worked out with great care. On 25 June 1941, the Danube Flotilla vessels, under cover of fire from the shore batteries and artillery of the 14th Rifle Corps, landed reconnaissance and sabotage sub-units of the NKVD on the Romanian bank. Regiments of the 51st Rifle Division of the 14th Rifle Corps were next to be landed. Members of the Soviet assault landing force acted swiftly and decisively. A complex operation involving river vessels, aircraft, field, shore and shipborne artillery, and sub-units of the Red Army and the NKVD had been successfully executed with clockwork precision. Everything had been prepared, coordinated, agreed and checked many times over. On the morning of 26 June 1941, the red flag was hoisted over the cathedral in the Romanian town of Kilia.

Kilia was roughly 130 kilometres from Ploesti, where the Romanian oilfields were. The oilfields which supplied the German Army in WW2 in oil, which were necessary to Nazi Germany's survival... Which was understood by all the allies, as the US Air Force [bombed it repeatedly](#). Germany got most of its oil from Romania (Ploesti refineries), and synthetic oil production - see [google answers](#). For the truly dedicated (like me!) nerds, look up [The Role of Synthetic Fuel In World War II Germany](#). I disagree with the author that "Yet a High Command study in May of 1941 noted that with monthly military requirements for 7.25 million barrels and imports and home production of only 5.35 million barrels, German stocks would be exhausted by August 1941. The 26 percent shortfall could only be made up with petroleum from Russia. The need to provide the lacking 1.9 million barrels per month and the urgency to gain possession of the Russian oil fields in the Caucasus mountains, together with Ukrainian grain and Donets coal, were thus prime elements in the German decision to invade the Soviet Union in June 1941", as it is bullshit...

And here is why:

The Soviet Union provided its ally Nazi Germany with 900,000 tons of mineral oil ([yale.com article](#)), per the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement.

OK, now we are getting into the nitty gritty. Take a break, get a drink of your favorite alcoholic beverage, and come back.

Exactly **why** did Germany invade the Soviet Union in WW2?

The pro-Soviet version of history postulates various explanations:

- 1) Germany did it for lebensraum, per the incoherent and rambling 'Mein Kampf'
- 2) Germany did it for economic reasons - to grab oil, coal located on Soviet territory
- 3) Hitler was craaaaaaaazy

Reason 2 is a no go, as the Soviet Union supplied Germany with everything it needed to kill Englishmen and their allies: oil, iron, food stuffs.

Reason 1 stipulates that Hitler was insane, which leads into reason 3. Hooray!

The logic of "official" WW2 historians is.... strange.

I already quoted Suvorov on how the Danube flotilla behaved during the first day of war. How did the rest of the Soviet Army behave?

John Erickson's *The Road to Stalingrad*: "Stalin agreed to a second directive being issued, Directive nr. 2(...) Signed by Zhukov as Chief of the General Staff, the directive stipulated 'active offensive operations'. (pg. 124)". This went over the Red Army communication system on 22 June, 07:15 hours.

Directive nr. 3, prescribed "nothing less than all three Soviet Fronts (Soviet Army Groups on the German frontier) taking the offensive" This directive went out on the Red Army wireless on 22 June, 21:15 (pg 132).

Suvorov again:

In the first hours following the beginning of the German invasion, the Red Army kept on trying to go over to the offensive. Modern textbooks call what the Red Army was doing counter-strikes and counter-offensives. But it was pure improvisation. The problem of counter-strikes had never been worked through in any pre-war exercises, nor indeed had it ever been considered in theoretical terms: 'the subject of counter-offensive... had never been raised before the Great Motherland War'. (IVOSS (the official history of the 'Great Patriotic War'), Vol. i, p. 441)

Operations of the Soviet fleets in the first minutes, hours and days of the war show sufficiently clearly that they did have plans, but that these were not plans for defence. On 22 June 1941, Soviet submarines of the Black Sea Fleet immediately put to sea and headed for the coasts of Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey. The same day submarines of the Baltic Fleet set sail for the coasts of Germany, with a mission to 'sink all enemy ships and vessels, in accordance with the rights of unrestricted submarine warfare'. (Order of Officer Commanding Baltic Fleet, 22 June 1941, Plot v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine, Moscow Nauka 1980, p. 279)

Beginning on 22 June, the air arm of the Black Sea Fleet carried out active combat operations in support of the Danube Naval Flotilla with the objective of opening a way upstream for the flotilla. On 25—26 June,

surface warships of the Black Sea Fleet appeared off the Romanian port of Constanza and began an intensive artillery bombardment with the obvious intention of making a naval assault landing. At the same time the Danube Naval Flotilla began to carry out assault landing operations in the Danube Delta.

On 22 June, the garrison at the naval base at Hanko, on Finnish territory, instead of going over to a stonewall defence, initiated some sustained assault landing operations, and held nineteen Finnish islands for several days. On 25 June, in spite of the enormous losses which the Soviet Air Forces had sustained in the first hours of the war, 487 aircraft belonging to the Baltic and Arctic Fleets launched a surprise strike at Finnish airfields. Again in spite of these enormous losses, the Soviet air forces conducted themselves with exceptional valour and aggression. On 22 June the 1st Air Corps made a concentrated raid on military objectives in Königsberg.

None of this was improvisation. At 6.44 am on 22 June the Soviet Air Force was given the mission of operating in accordance with its plans, and for a few days it tried to do this. On 26 June, the 4th Air Corps began bombing raids on the Ploesti oilfields in Romania.

On 22 June 1941, the 41st Rifle Division of the 6th Army's 6th Rifle Corps, without waiting for orders from above, crossed the state frontier near Raval-Russkaya. That same morning, and without waiting for orders from Moscow, Colonel-General F. I. Kuznetsov, officer commanding the North-West Front, ordered his troops to launch an attack towards Tilsit in East Prussia. This decision came as no surprise either to the headquarters staff of the North-West Front or to the officers commanding the armies and their staffs, for a version of the attack on Tilsit had been played out in headquarters exercises held a few days previously, 'and it was very familiar to the commanders of the formations and their headquarters'. (Bor'ba za Sovetskuyu Pribaltiku, Eesti Raamat, Tallinn 1980, Vol. i, p. 67)

the commanders at tactical level were not entitled to know what their tasks would be, but in the senior headquarters, these tasks had been exactly defined and formulated, placed under seal in secret envelopes, and kept in the safe in every headquarters, up to and including the level of battalion. For instance, the Reconnaissance Battalion of the 27th Rifle Division, concentrated close to the frontier near the town of Augustow, was preparing to carry out combat reconnaissance in the direction of Suwalki. (Arkhiv MO SSSR, Archive 181, list 1631, item i, p. 128) The task of the Reconnaissance Battalion was to ensure the swift

advance of the entire 27th Division from near Augustow to Suwalki.

So using our two dangerous weapons - logic and common sense - let us attack now.

If the Soviet Union had no plans which the Army units could use in the event of an enemy attack on the country, if the military forces, when the enemy attacked, immediately went over the offensive themselves, when they were told by the Chief of Staff to attack, all Fronts, attack! ... What does that tell us the plans of the Soviet Union were in WW2?

End Game

Constantine Pleshakov, freely available in the USA, and at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com):

Stalin's decision to put the new defense line right on the border looked unbelievably foolish to Zhukov. He couldn't say so bluntly, but he was shockingly audacious in expressing his doubts. (...) The troops had also been placed too close to the border, where they could be hit by a sudden German attack. One area of Pavlov's military district, the Belostok salient, looked especially vulnerable, as the Red Army could easily be trapped by the attacking Germans.

(...)

It had been a while since a general had dared to doubt the wisdom of Stalin's decisions. The remarks caused an uproar. Pavlov venomously said that in Zhukov's military district the fortifications were being built right on the border as well. Voroshilov angrily advised Zhukov to mind his own business

Preparing for defensive warfare, a country never put its fortifications right on the border and never placed its army in narrow strips of territory like the Belostok salient, where it could be easily strangled by the enemy.

Only a few people in the room knew that Stalin's real plan was to skip defensive war altogether and strike at Germany first.

Joseph Stalin had many skeletons in his closet, but in January 1941 the preemptive war plan was his best guarded secret. (...) In strategic terms, an attack on Hitler looked both feasible and desirable. (...) Stalin was sure that the Fuhrer was still focusing on Britain, leaving his eastern flank relatively weak. Only after Germany finished in the West, Stalin argued, would Hitler send the bulk of his troops to the Soviet Union's border. He didn't believe that Hitler would risk a war on two fronts, **and common sense supported that view**, since such strategic arrogance had cost Germany a catastrophic defeat in World War I

In the summer of 1940, under Shaposhnikov's guidance, Vasilevsky started work on the preemptive strike plan. (...) The main task they envisaged for the Red Army sounded heavily preemptive: "to defeat the German forces concentrating in East Prussia and around Warsaw".

Vasilevsky was told to rewrite the draft. (...) In October, under Stalin's pressure, Timoshenko and Meretskov cancelled the attack in the north altogether (into Prussia and Poland - AG) and agreed that the Red Army should strike in the south (Romania - AG). Now the Army was expected "to cut Germany off from the Balkans in order to deprive it of paramount economic resources(...)" (i.e. Romanian oil from Ploesti)

The generals knew that the vozhd (leader, or fuhrer, in Russian - AG), favored the south as the major strategic theatre(...). The document suggested striking from the Ukraine and defeating the Germans' main force in southern Poland. The Kiev military district, transformed into a group called the Southwestern Front, was to lead the attack, its troops striking at Krakow (in German occupied Poland -AG) In accordance with Zhukov's megalomaniacal tendencies, the southwestern Front was to send about 1 million men and 8,000 tanks into battle. Romania would also be invaded.

The air force needed more planes along the frontier as well. The plan also noted that it was time to start working on the rear, establishing new hospitals and depots.

No date was given for the attack, but the document suggested finalizing preparations in 1942.

And then Rudolf Hess flew a Me-110 to Britain. Hess was a deputy fuhrer. **What that meant, is that he was officially second in command to Hitler.**

I will let you think on that for a minute. The number 2 person in Nazi Germany secretly flies himself to the UK, which is at war with Germany...

Back for more? OK!

Stalin, the ever suspicious, believed that Hitler and Churchill were secretly negotiating a separate peace. In 1940 this was a very attractive proposition to the British government, if you remember your official schoolbook version of history. According to Pleshakov, Stalin "simply

couldn't believe that the second in command in the Nazi Party had just flown a plane to Britain to negotiate an alliance with London because he was insane." (pg 80). I am having my doubts too about that whole mysterious episode. But what happened officially was that Hitler declared Hess insane, the British imprisoned him, denied him any opportunity to give interviews, *drugged him up to make him insane*, then finally he was killed in Spandau prison long after the war.

Needless to say, Hess' (and possibly Hitler's) desperate plan to make peace with the United Kingdom failed.

Regardless, Pleshakov states that: "Hess' defection was a **pivotal** moment that spring. After it happened, Stalin decided to accelerate war preparations. Whatever precipitated Hess' flight, he was now no longer sure he had until the summer of 1942. The Red Army had to be able to move sooner than that." (pg 81).

The relocation of seven armies to the west wouldn't solve the problem of manpower. however, at least two more were needed. Also, many existing units were heavily understaffed. In May and June, 800,000 reservists were quietly drafted. All military schools were ordered to finish early that year so the young lieutenants could be sent to the west.

The accelerated buildup suggested that the army would be ready to strike by midsummer (1941 -AG). The seven armies were expected to be in place by July 10(...).

In total, almost 3 million soldiers were deployed between the Baltic and the Black Sea. **That figure included eleven police regiments charged with imposing order on the territories that were to be occupied.** (...) Soon the districts were to be renamed "Fronts", as the tentative war plan was envisioned. The existence of a Front unambiguously implied war. The Russian language had no word for a front line mega unit during peace time; only a fighting army could have such a thing.

By June 20, the Red Army Propaganda Directorate prepared a secret document. Pleshakov: "It was quite explicit, saying that it was useless to build defenses against the German juggernaut, as the example of a number of European countries had proved, and that the Soviet Union would therefore 'apply an offensive strategy' against Germany" (pg 84).

Mikhail Kalinin, president of USSR (a ceremonial function), addressed the graduates of the Lenin Military Academy on June 5, 1941: "War os the time when you can expand communism!"

AmericanGoy disclaimer:

The biggest obstacle to the truth about this portion of WW2 history are

two arguments:

- 1) The apologists for the Soviet Union, who for various reasons want to see that country as a liberator of people oppressed under Nazi tyranny, just like the Western Allies were, do not want this to come to light.
- 2) The historians, who throughout their lives unerringly wrote one version of history, until it became so ingrained that it was considered heresy in professional historical circles to question the narrative.

There is also the third argument, that by arguing that Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union was in effect a pre-emptive war, that that somehow whitewashes Hitler and Nazi Germany's crimes, and so they are anti semitic in nature.

Which argument is simply bullshit.

Any amateur or serious student of history has to realize, **that both** Nazi Germany and Stalin's (and his successors) Soviet Union were tyrannical dictatorships, which used secret police to keep dissent down, which both tortured their political opponents and random victims, which both imprisoned millions of people. **Both killed millions of people.**

It is true that this historical information is used by modern neo-nazis to somehow whitewash Hitler's actions. Well, it does not make it so to this amateur historian...

To me, rooting for one side or the other in the Soviet-Nazi war is akin to a situation when two gangs in your home city are fighting a turf war over drug territory. Which gang would you root for - the Bloods or the Crips?

Or perhaps you would realize that both of them are one and the same...

Must see online resources:

Icebreaker **FULL** book (since it is impossible to buy it in America - I did not place this work online though): [Icebreaker, by Viktor Suvorov, real name Rezun](#) At the link, look to the right, you can download this as a PDF document or text... Not that I am advocating an obviously illegal action of downloading a book unavailable in the market off the internet, and whoever placed the Icebreaker's full version in English on the web should be ashamed of themselves! Harrumph, my good sir (or madam)! Harrumph I say!

Google preview book: [Pleshakov's Stalin's Folly](#)

Biography of the "historian troublemaker", nom de plume Viktor Suvorov:

[on the incredible internet resource Wikipedia.](#)

Bonus Material:

Haaretz article on [Mischa Shauli](#) :

Mischa Shauli sat at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., completely beside himself. It had been years since the first time he heard about the existence of a document said to prove that Stalin, not Hitler, bore the main responsibility for World War II, and for years he had searched for it with all his skills as a professional detective. Shauli's last position was as Commander Shauli, Representative of the Israel Police in Russia. Previous to that he had been head of the police fraud investigation unit for the Southern District.

A few years ago Shauli read "Icebreaker: Who Started the Second World War," by Bogdan Rozen. Rozen, who now lives in England, wrote it under the pseudonym of Viktor Suvorov. Shauli, impressed by the book, translated it into Hebrew and saw to its publication here.

From out of the sea of details, a coherent thesis emerges: Stalin dragged Hitler into war to force Europe into chaos and facilitate a communist revolution on the continent. According to Shauli, there is evidence to back up this theory, including a speech by Stalin himself as well as a report obtained by the U.S. Consulate in Prague. The report has been mentioned here and there over the years, but it has never been published, because no one knows where it is today.

Advertisement

Shauli, 59, believed that the definitive evidence was out there, hiding somewhere. He believed, and did not give up, repeatedly setting out to find it, going as far as Washington. No one is happier than he is today: The document is in his possession, and now the history of World War II may have to be rewritten: It was Stalin's fault.

The document, from October 1939, consists of three pages in English that purportedly reflect a dialogue in Moscow between a delegation from Czechoslovakia and a senior Soviet Foreign Ministry official. The Czechs tried to find out why the U.S.S.R. had signed the nonaggression treaty with Nazi Germany, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939. A few days later the Germans invaded Poland, and World War II began.

The Soviet official, Alexandrov by name, explained to the Czech delegation that had the Soviet Union signed an agreement with the West, Hitler would not have dared to launch a war, and without that war there would have been no possibility of imposing communism in Europe. He also listed the benefits to the Soviet Union of the pact with Nazi Germany, and of the war.

The veracity of the document must be proved, and even if it turns out to be genuine, its significance is worthy of debate. Mischa Shauli is

continuing his investigation. **No, he said this week, he does not fear that shifting responsibility for the war from Hitler to Stalin "acquits" Hitler; he is responsible for other crimes.**

Wednesday, January 30, 2008

[WW2 Operation Barbarossa 1941 - the Real History version](#)

The trouble with historians is that they concentrate exclusively on the question of *what* happened, and never on the *why* it happened. This goes with a territory - that is what being a historian is all about; a sort of a journalist of the past, reporting the news as they happened, and not as they happen.

This leads to a problem, however.

Some facts get obscured by others, in effect they become forgotten, and so an unclear, muddled picture of the past emerges. Many historians, some because they are ordered to by their government, others because of nationalism, are inherently biased, and so pick and choose the reported facts. Many times, the original documents are missing, or kept stored in secret safes, never to be seen by the world's public as they would embarrass the country...

So a kind of a dogma, almost a religious cult, with all the heated passions, springs up about historical issues. Especially if it involves your country, which is pure as the driven snow, and would never, ever do bad (exception - if you lose the war, you are fucked, as it is commonly known that "the victors write the history books").

And so it was that the narrative, the evil Nazi Germany invaded the peaceful, innocent Soviet Union in World War 2 took hold.

Enter [Icebreaker by Viktor Suvorov](#).

In 1939, due to Stalin's political maneuvering, Hitler is made to act the part of the "Icebreaker of the Revolution", and entangles Europe (and the world) in a global, terrifying war. The Soviet Union is officially not involved.

In 1941, Soviet Union was finishing a gigantic national mobilization, and getting ready to attack its then ally, Hitler's Nazi Germany (and German allies).

Lets look at the history in some detail.

The revolution in 1917 which happened in Tsarist Russia, overthrew the Tsar put the Bolshevik party in power. The Bolsheviks were communists - the followers of the theoretical ramblings of Marx and Engels (German philosophers), advocating a "socioeconomic structure that promotes the establishment of a classless, stateless society based on common

ownership of the means of production" ([Wikipedia Communism entry](#)).

"Will it be possible for this revolution to take place in one country alone? No." - Friedrich Engels, *The Principles of Communism*, 1847

The Bolsheviks faithfully followed Marx and Engels' teachings on the need to change the world from the capitalist system into the communist one. Effectively, this meant a declaration of war by the Soviet Union against all non-communist countries in the world, to change their system of government.

"The bourgeoisie still rules over much of the world and so most Communist Parties and also the Communist International as the united party of the world revolutionary proletariat have to fight it." [Communist 3rd Congress: The Organisational Structure of the Communist Parties, the Methods and Content of Their Work, 1920](#).

The Third Communist Congress quotes:

"Before the revolution, and even after it, we thought: either revolution breaks out in the other countries, in the capitalistically more developed countries, immediately, or at least very quickly, or we must perish. In spite of this conviction, we did all we possibly could to preserve the Soviet system under all circumstances, come what may, **because we knew that we were not only working for ourselves, but also for the international revolution**" [1921, 3rd Congress theses](#)

"We Marxists do not belong to that category of people who are unqualified opponents of all war. We say: our aim is to achieve a socialist system of society, which, by eliminating the division of mankind into classes, by eliminating all exploitation of man by man and nation by nation, will inevitably eliminate the very possibility of war."

[Article in Pravda No. 93, written by Lenin](#)

The Bolshevik, later called the Communist Party of the Soviet Union - they saw themselves as the vanguard of the world revolution, because that was its *raison d'être* (its reason for existence): from [worldrevolution.org.uk](#): "Lenin stressed, as Karl Marx had done before him, that in order for Socialism to succeed, capitalists would need to be overthrown in several advanced countries too. He took the lead in organising a new world revolutionary party, the Communist (Third) International in 1919 after the betrayal of the Socialist (Second) International. The Third International bound revolutionary parties from all over the world in a common fight to repeat the successes of October 1917 and open the road to world socialism."

After Lenin came Stalin. And an abrupt change happened in the Soviet Union's policies.

[From the Wikipedia:](#) "Socialism in One Country was a thesis developed by Nikolai Bukharin in 1925 and adopted as state policy by Joseph Stalin. The thesis held that given the defeat of all communist revolutions in Europe from 1917–1921 except in Russia, the Soviet Union should begin to strengthen itself internally".

So, all the revolutions that sparked up in European countries in the 1920's were defeated. Again, same article: **"This theory was in an opposition to Lenin's beliefs that while a revolution may happen in one country, the final success of socialism in one country, especially in such a backward one as Russia, is impossible without proletarian revolutions in other, advanced countries of Western Europe"**.

So at first glance we have Stalin paying put to all talk of world revolution, and concentrating on internal national problems in the Soviet Union.

Seemingly.

I am a big fan of taking a look at what a politician is doing, as opposed to what he is saying (The old adage of "When do you know a politician is lying? When his lips are moving!"). So let's take a look at what was happening in the Soviet Union when Stalin ruled it with an iron hand. Lets...

1928: Stalin overturns the Lenin policy of the capitalism lite New Economic Program (NEP - google it yourself). In [this speech in 1928](#), Stalin explains himself: "The independence of our country cannot be upheld unless we have an adequate industrial basis for defence. And such an industrial basis cannot be created if our industry is not more highly developed technically".

What this lead to in practice, was that all the national resources went into heavy industry, such as iron mills, factories and the like. This left the ordinary people genuinely fucked. For example, the peasants experienced the joys of Collectivisation, which is a fancy word for the communist government thugs taking private farms away and putting all peasants into government run farms. And establishing quotas of grain and wheat production.

Failure to produce said quotas resulted in executions, and the policy itself resulted in mass starvation and cases of cannibalism. According to Robert Conquest in his book *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivisation and the Terror-Famine*, this policy resulted in 7 million deaths.

Effectively then, Collectivisation was modern day work slavery, similar to American South exploitation of blacks. The policy itself resulted in millions of victims. This is a good [webpage primer on the reality of communist rule](#)

. For a good scholarly study, read the preview of [The Economic Transformation of the Soviet Union by Davis, Harrison and Wheatcroft](#). Highly recommended, and free to you online.

But the policy itself was successful. It made the Soviet Union into an economic powerhouse, despite the millions of dead, starving or resettled victims in the Gulags. This was observed by (then) Colonel Heinz Guderian, as he visited the Kharkov Tank Factory in 1933 (the two socialist countries, Germany and Russia, were allies back then): it produced 22 tanks per day. This is pretty staggering, as Germany entered WW2 with just 3195 tanks... Or about 159 days of just one Soviet factory production. This is taken directly from Icebreaker and [Defense conversion Strategies by NATO ASI series](#).

By my standards, Stalin's industrialization was successful - it accomplished its goals to make the country into a modern military power. 22 tank produced per day in just one factory in one city... in 1933.

I will pause here and let you think on that for a second. Take a deep breath.

Ready? Moving on now...

Before there was WW2, there was the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Read up the [bullshit version on Wikipedia](#), ponder them, and then come back here.

"For a long time, the primary motive of Stalin's sudden change of course was assumed to be the fear of German aggressive intentions." That was before Suvorov's Icebreaker book came out, that is.

First fact: Hitler's Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union attacked Poland together in 1939, as they agreed to in the pact. You can see some pictures of German and Soviet soldiers yukking it up in 1939 in Poland [here](#) and the actual documentary film [here](#) - the second link is recommended.

Second fact: Despite the Soviet Union being an ally of Hitler, and invading Poland together with Germany, the French and UK governments only declared war on Germany in 1939. They did not declare war on the second aggressor and Nazi ally, the Soviet Union...

I will let you think on that for a second. Take a deep breath, exhale...

OK, moving on.

So, to sum up the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact - Western Europe was at war with Nazi Germany, while the Soviet Union stayed aloof from the fracas. They were at peace.

But that is not the whole picture, far from the truth at all about that period of WW2. While Germany annexed the western part of Poland, the Soviet Union took over [the eastern part, totaling 201,015 km² and a population of 13.299 million.](#)

Hardly the action of a peace loving country.

In early 1940, Germany invaded Denmark and Norway. The peaceful and not involved in the raging world war Soviet Union, took over [Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.](#)

What we see here are actions of two allies, two predators, two animals of the same ilk. But in popular WW2 schoolbook history, we somehow learn only about how Hitler's Germany was the evil country and the sole source of WW2. The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact is explained as a play for time, to buy time to prepare by the Soviet Union for the inevitable German invasion.

I hope that the previous list of Soviet (and German) aggressions persuaded you that that view of WW2 history is bullshit.

If not, I will let Suvorov explain it all again:

In September 1939, the Soviet Union declared itself neutral and, during the 'pre-war period', seized territories with populations totalling 23 million people - not bad going for a neutral state.

The Red Army and the NKVD perpetrated fearful crimes in these captured territories. Soviet concentration camps were crammed with imprisoned soldiers and officers from a number of European countries. Officer prisoners, and not only the Poles, were shot in their thousands. This is not the action of a neutral state.

Here is a strange state of affairs. Germany attacked Poland, which means that Germany was the instigator of, and participant in, the European and then the World War. The Soviet Union did the same thing in the same month, but it does not judge itself to have been an instigator of the war. Nor does it consider itself even to have then been a participant in the war.

A Polish soldier killed in battle on Polish territory against the Red Army is considered a participant in World War II, as well as its victim, while the Soviet soldier who killed him is regarded as 'neutral'. If in the same battle a Soviet soldier is killed, then it is judged that he has been killed not in wartime but in peacetime - in the 'pre-war period'.

To further set the stage, I will let Suvorov quote Pravda articles from these days when Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union were allies: The foundations of the earth are trembling,' it wrote. 'The ground slips from under the feet of peoples and nations. Glows are afire in the sky and the thunder of guns shakes seas and continents. Powers and states are blown away just like chaff in the wind. How excellent it is, how extraordinarily wonderful, when the world is shaken to its very foundations, when powers perish and greatness falls.' (Pravda, 4 August 1940) 'Every such war brings us closer to that happy time when murders among the people will no longer happen. (Pravda, 18 August 1940)

The Soviet newspaper article writers were bursting with unbridled joy and happiness that the capitalists are killing each other.

The Soviet general Krivoschin, who in 1939 took part in the Nazi-Soviet victory parade in Brest, Poland, had this to say: "We have concluded a treaty with the Germans', he said, 'but this means nothing. Now is the most wonderful time to solve all world problems once and for all, and in a constructive way.' (Ratnaya ByV, Molodaya Gvardiya, 1962, p. 8)"

"Divide our enemies, meet the demands of each of them temporarily and then destroy them one at a time, giving them no opportunity to unite. (Pravda, 4 March 1941)"

This is what the outlook was of the hapless, unprepared for war Soviet Union, just trembling and cowering before the might of the mighty Wehrmacht.

I will pause again and let you process this information. Go to the restroom, grab a drink, make some popcorn, get some cookies... Ready?

Suvorov uses those two most dangerous weapons of all, *logic and common sense*.

He calmly states that, if the Soviet Union was interested in protecting its national territory, it would have kept Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia as buffer states, and warned Germany not to invade them. After all (using that dangerous common sense again) it would be very hard for Germany to invade the Soviet Union if they did not have a common border!

The apologists for the Soviet Union claim that the attack on Finland, the annexation of the Baltic countries (Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia) was all done to protect the Soviet Union. That is a strange, weird il-logic - I do not think that if any other country attacked and took over another country, and then claimed it was for self defense, that that argument would work.

But this is the Soviet Union's history, and that argument is discussed and agreed upon in serious scholarly books and articles.

Suvorov then continues with his second logic and common sense attack on the biggest historical lie of WW2 (second only to Pearl Harbor - that blog post upcoming). Having gotten a common border with Germany, what should have happened is that the Soviet Army should have built their own version of the Maginot Line - it should have mined the bridges on the border, built bunkers, tank traps, machine gun nests, etc etc.

Suvorov explains:

A country which is preparing its defence deploys its army deep inside its own territory, and not on its very frontier. The object is to prevent the enemy from destroying the main defending forces with one surprise attack. A defending side will normally build a security zone in the frontier areas in plenty of time; a zone where the terrain has been saturated with traps, engineered defences, obstacles and minefields. The defending side will deliberately avoid constructing anything related to industry or transport in this zone; nor will it keep any heavy military formations or large quantities of supplies there. On the contrary, timely preparations will have been made to blow up all bridges, tunnels and roads in this zone.

Once inside the security zone, the aggressor loses speed of movement, and his troops sustain losses before they even encounter the main forces of the defender. Only small but highly mobile detachments of the defending side operate in the security zone. These detachments spring ambushes, launch surprise attacks and then quickly withdraw to previously prepared positions. Light detachments create the impression that

they are the main force, compelling the aggressor to stop, deploy his forces and waste his shells on areas where there is nothing to hit. The light detachments, meanwhile, secretly withdraw to prepare new ambushes.

While the aggressor is waging an exhausting battle with the light detachments of the covering force, the main defending forces have time to prepare themselves to confront the aggressor from positions which favour defence.

So how does that work in practice, Mr. Suvorov?

(...)the Red Army itself created strong security zones on its own frontiers, particularly its western borders. Special government commissions inspected the country's western regions and determined which zones an enemy would find easiest to cross, and which would afford him most difficulty. Teams of bridge-protection guards, trained in demolition work, were made ready to blow up all the bridges in the

western regions. The 60-metre long railway bridge at Olev, for example, could have been blown up by the duplicated explosion system in two and a half minutes. (I. Starinov, *Miny Zhdut Svoego Chasa*, Moscow Voenizdat 1964, p. 24)

Heavy pipe-lines, depots, water pumps, water towers, high embankments and deep cuttings were all prepared to be blown up. (Ibid, p. 18) By the end of 1929, 60 teams of demolition sappers, totalling 1,400 men, had been trained in the Kiev Military District alone. These had at their disposal '1,640 fully prepared sophisticated charges and tens of thousands of safety-fuse detonator sets, which were ready literally for instant use.' (Ibid, p. 22) Similar activity was also going on in other military districts.

In addition to the teams of demolition sappers which had been set up in the western regions of the country, railway-blocking battalions were formed. One of their tasks was to destroy the main railway junctions in the event of a retreat and to create defence obstacles on the main arterial routes by destroying roads and laying delayed-action land mines lest the enemy should try to rebuild the roads. There were four such battalions in the Ukraine in 1932. (Ibid, p. 175)

Railway points crossings, communications equipment, telegraph wires and in some cases even the rails were got ready to be removed. (M. Tukhachevsky, *Izbrannye Proizvedeniya*, Moscow Voenizdat 1964, Vol. i pp. 65-67)

The Soviet security zone underwent continuous improvements. The number of targets prepared for demolition steadily grew. New defence obstacles were created: forest barriers; artificial reservoirs in front of defensive constructions; preparations were even made to flood some areas.

The Soviet Union then declared war on Finland and experienced a security zone on its own attacking troops.

The failures of the Red Army on this occasion were not simply the results of miscalculations by the Soviet command. More important was the fact that the Finnish Army was prepared for defence, and ready to make sacrifices. The Finns had erected their security zone in front of their main line of defence. This zone - some 40-60 kilometres deep (*Sovetskaya Voennaya Entsiklopediya*, Vol. 6, p. 504) - was strewn with minefields and defence obstacles. Snipers, sappers and light mobile detachments were extremely active.

Suvorov continues the narrative:

All the Soviet commanders who fought there expressed their admiration of the Finnish security zone. Foremost among them was K. Meretskov, who commanded the 1st Army. (Na Sluzhbe Narodu, Moscow IPL 1968, p. 184) After he had finally overcome the Finnish security zone and had assessed its worth, Meretskov was appointed Chief of the General Staff. So how did he make use of his experience in order to reinforce the Soviet security zone which had been set up along the Soviet Union's western frontiers?

Meretskov ordered that:

1. The security zone which had previously been constructed along the Soviet Union's western frontiers should be dismantled, the teams of demolition sappers disbanded, the explosive charges removed, the mines rendered harmless, and the defence obstacles razed to the ground;
2. No security zone should be set up in the new lands;
3. The main forces of the Red Army should be moved right up to the frontiers, without a security zone to protect them;
4. The strategic resources of the Red Army should be brought from the heart of the country and concentrated directly on the frontier;
5. A vast works programme should begin at once to build a network of roads and airfields in western Byelorussia and in the western Ukraine: single-lane roads were to be made into dual-lane roads, the capacity of the roads was to be increased; and new roads leading directly to the German border were to be built.

Come again?

That does not plan like a defensive zone to act as a buffer between Germany and the Soviet Union. That sounds like a country that is expecting an invasion of... tourists, not enemy troops. Why was this enormous programme of public works undertaken, why did the Soviet troops move towards the border when the defensive obstacles were "razed to the ground"?

Perhaps Stalin was counting on an already existing fortification, already built. Perhaps... The so called Stalin Line did indeed exist.

In the 1930s, thirteen fortified regions, or URs, were built along the Soviet Union's western frontier, in a strip of territory which was unofficially called the Stalin Line.

The basic element of the fortified regions was the DOT, or permanent fire position. In its issue of 25 February 1983, the newspaper Red Star gave a description of DOT No. 112 in the 53rd UR, situated in the Mogilev-Podolsk region. This was one of the completely standard DOTs in the Stalin Line.

It consisted of complex tunnelled fortification defences, which contained communication trenches, caponiers, compartments and filtration systems.

It also had armouries, ammunition stores, food supplies, a medical unit, a mess room, water supply (which incidentally is still functioning), a recreation and reading room, and observation and command posts. The armament of the DOT consisted of machine-gun positions with three firing embrasures. In these posts there were three 'maxims' mounted on special turrets and two single-gun caponiers with a cannon in each one.

(...)

Colonel-General A. I. Shebunin, another participant in that mighty work of construction, tells us that in the Proskurov UR alone, more than one thousand reinforced concrete defence-works were constructed in just three years.

OK, so there was an already existing "Maginot Line" in the Soviet Union.

Curious thing happened though:

"In Autumn 1939, however, when World War II began and a common frontier with Germany was established, all construction work on the Stalin Line was stopped. (V. Anfilov: Bessmertnyi Podvig, Moscow Nauka 1971, p. 35)"

"The garrisons in the fortified regions of the Stalin Line were first reduced in size and then disbanded completely. Soviet factories stopped producing armament and special equipment destined for fortification installations. The existing fortified regions were dismantled, and their armament, ammunition and all observation, communications and fire-control equipment were put into storage. (VIZH 1961 No. 9, p. 120)"

I do not know how future historians will explain this crime against our people. Present-day historians pass over this event in complete silence, and I do not know why. The Soviet government fleeced its people of many billions of roubles (no less than 120 billion, according to my calculations) in order to build fortifications, impregnable to any enemy, along the entire western frontier, from sea to sea, from the grey Baltic to the azure Black Sea. Yet just before war broke out, in spring 1941, powerful explosions thundered along the 1,200-kilometre-long stretch of fortifications. Strong double and single caponiers built of reinforced concrete, firing positions with one, two and three embrasures, command posts, observation posts, and tens of thousands of permanent defensive installations were all blown up on Stalin's personal orders. (Major-General P. G. Grigorenko, VPodpol'eMozhno Vstretit' Tol'ko Krysa, New York 1981, p. 141)

Come again?

Summing up - the old fortification on the old Soviet frontier was dismantled, its troop levels reduced, its armament put into storage. The

new frontier's defense zone was not built to compensate.

Besides, when defending yourself, two Maginot Lines are better than one, so even if you *did* plan to build a new Stalin Line on the new German-Soviet border, why in the world would you destroy the old one?

That common sense and logic again... Dangerous weapons indeed.

Instead of making bunkers and planting mines, the Soviet Army in 1939-1941 was busy training paratroopers. There were 10 Airborne Corps created pre war and during initial days of Barbarossa in 1939-1941 ([quoted figures from soldat.ru forum](#))

In the course of the manoeuvres held in Kiev in 1935, a parachute assault force of 1,200 men was dropped, immediately followed by an air-landed assault force of 2,500 men armed with heavy weaponry including artillery, armoured cars and tanks.

In Byelorussia in 1936, in the course of practising the same offensive theme, a parachute assault force of 1,800 men was dropped. They were followed by an air-landed assault force of 5,700 men armed with heavy weaponry. In the same year, the full complement of the 84th Rifle Division made an air-landed assault in the course of offensive manoeuvres in the Moscow Military Division.

Common sense and logic: paratroopers are not used in defensive, only in an offensive.

Need a break? No? Continuing...

Among the many defensive systems which the Soviet Union possessed was the Dnieper Naval Flotilla.
(...)

The formidable barrier formed by the Dnieper, the bridges ready to be detonated, and the river Flotilla working in cooperation with the field troops, artillery and air force, could have safely barred the way to the industrial regions of the southern Ukraine and the Soviet bases on the Black Sea. The German Blitzkrieg could have been stopped on the river-banks, or at least held up there for several months.

Instead of one defensive flotilla, Stalin then created two new ones, the Danube Flotilla and the Pinsk Flotilla. The Soviet Danube Flotilla was formed before the Soviet Union acquired an outlet to the Danube. In the course of Zhukov's 'liberation campaign' in the Romanian frontier regions, Stalin took Bukovina and Bessarabia from Romania. Right at the mouth of the Danube, a sector of the eastern bank of the river, some dozens of kilometres long, passed into the possession of the Soviet Union. The

Danube Flotilla, which had already been set up in expectation of this event, was moved there immediately

The Danube Naval Flotilla included about 70 naval river vessels and launches, sub-units of the fighter air force, and anti-aircraft and shore artillery. The conditions where the base had to be built were frightful. The Soviet bank of the Danube Delta was barren and exposed. The vessels had to moor at open berths, with Romanian troops sometimes only 300 metres away.

In the event of a defensive war, the entire Danube Flotilla would have fallen into a trap the moment hostilities began. The enemy could simply rake the Soviet vessels with machine-gun fire, preventing them from raising anchor and casting off. In a defensive war, moreover, the Danube Naval Flotilla would have had no useful function. Given its location, there were simply no defensive tasks for it to fulfil. The Danube Delta consists of hundreds of lakes, impassable swamps and hundreds of square kilometres of reed marshes. It is the last place through which an enemy would choose to attack the Soviet Union.

There was only one way to explain the siting of the Danube Flotilla; its purpose was to carry out combat operations upstream while Red Army troops were making a general advance. If you gather 70 river vessels in the delta of a great river, they have nowhere to go except upstream. This meant that they would have to operate on the territory of Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Germany.

The Danube Flotilla was of no use to anyone in a defensive war, and it was condemned to be destroyed immediately in its open moorings on a bank raked by enemy gunfire. In an offensive war, however, the Danube Flotilla would be a mortal danger to Germany. It only had to move 130 kilometres upstream for the strategic bridge at Chernavada to come under fire from its guns. That in its turn would mean that the flow of oil from Ploesti to the port of Constanza would be cut off. Another 200 kilometres upstream and the entire German war machine would come to a halt simply because German tanks, aircraft and submarines would have been left without fuel.

Of course, the apologists for their version of history will tell us that everything that Suvorov writes about the flotilla was defensive in nature.

Which does not explain how, during the first day of the Axis invasion on the Soviet Union,

As soon as they learnt that the war had begun, the Soviet commanders put the finishing touches to their preparations to launch an assault landing operation. The action to be taken by the Soviet Flotilla commanders, and also by the commanders of the 14th Rifle Corps, whose divisions were

concentrated in the Danube Delta area, and by the commanders of the 79th Frontier Detachment of the NKVD, had been previously planned and worked out with great care. On 25 June 1941, the Danube Flotilla vessels, under cover of fire from the shore batteries and artillery of the 14th Rifle Corps, landed reconnaissance and sabotage sub-units of the NKVD on the Romanian bank. Regiments of the 51st Rifle Division of the 14th Rifle Corps were next to be landed. Members of the Soviet assault landing force acted swiftly and decisively. A complex operation involving river vessels, aircraft, field, shore and shipborne artillery, and sub-units of the Red Army and the NKVD had been successfully executed with clockwork precision. Everything had been prepared, coordinated, agreed and checked many times over. On the morning of 26 June 1941, the red flag was hoisted over the cathedral in the Romanian town of Kilia.

Kilia was roughly 130 kilometres from Ploesti, where the Romanian oilfields were. The oilfields which supplied the German Army in WW2 in oil, which were necessary to Nazi Germany's survival... Which was understood by all the allies, as the US Air Force [bombed it repeatedly](#). Germany got most of its oil from Romania (Ploesti refineries), and synthetic oil production - see [google answers](#). For the truly dedicated (like me!) nerds, look up [The Role of Synthetic Fuel In World War II Germany](#). I disagree with the author that "Yet a High Command study in May of 1941 noted that with monthly military requirements for 7.25 million barrels and imports and home production of only 5.35 million barrels, German stocks would be exhausted by August 1941. The 26 percent shortfall could only be made up with petroleum from Russia. The need to provide the lacking 1.9 million barrels per month and the urgency to gain possession of the Russian oil fields in the Caucasus mountains, together with Ukrainian grain and Donetsk coal, were thus prime elements in the German decision to invade the Soviet Union in June 1941", as it is bullshit...

And here is why:

The Soviet Union provided its ally Nazi Germany with 900,000 tons of mineral oil ([yale.com article](#)), per the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement.

OK, now we are getting into the nitty gritty. Take a break, get a drink of your favorite alcoholic beverage, and come back.

Exactly **why** did Germany invade the Soviet Union in WW2?

The pro-Soviet version of history postulates various explanations:

- 1) Germany did it for lebensraum, per the incoherent and rambling 'Mein Kampf'
- 2) Germany did it for economic reasons - to grab oil, coal located on Soviet territory
- 3) Hitler was craaaaaaaazy

Reason 2 is a no go, as the Soviet Union supplied Germany with everything it needed to kill Englishmen and their allies: oil, iron, food stuffs.

Reason 1 stipulates that Hitler was insane, which leads into reason 3. Hooray!

The logic of "official" WW2 historians is.... strange.

I already quoted Suvorov on how the Danube flotilla behaved during the first day of war. How did the rest of the Soviet Army behave?

John Erickson's *The Road to Stalingrad*: "Stalin agreed to a second directive being issued, Directive nr. 2(...) Signed by Zhukov as Chief of the General Staff, the directive stipulated 'active offensive operations'. (pg. 124)". This went over the Red Army communication system on 22 June, 07:15 hours.

Directive nr. 3, prescribed "nothing less than all three Soviet Fronts (Soviet Army Groups on the German frontier) taking the offensive" This directive went out on the Red Army wireless on 22 June, 21:15 (pg 132).

Suvorov again:

In the first hours following the beginning of the German invasion, the Red Army kept on trying to go over to the offensive. Modern textbooks call what the Red Army was doing counter-strikes and counter-offensives. But it was pure improvisation. The problem of counter-strikes had never been worked through in any pre-war exercises, nor indeed had it ever been considered in theoretical terms: 'the subject of counter-offensive... had never been raised before the Great Motherland War'. (IVOSS (the official history of the 'Great Patriotic War'), Vol. i, p. 441)

Operations of the Soviet fleets in the first minutes, hours and days of the war show sufficiently clearly that they did have plans, but that these were not plans for defence. On 22 June 1941, Soviet submarines of the Black Sea Fleet immediately put to sea and headed for the coasts of Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey. The same day submarines of the Baltic Fleet set sail for the coasts of Germany, with a mission to 'sink all enemy ships and vessels, in accordance with the rights of unrestricted submarine warfare'. (Order of Officer Commanding Baltic Fleet, 22 June 1941, Plot v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine, Moscow Nauka 1980, p. 279)

Beginning on 22 June, the air arm of the Black Sea Fleet carried out active combat operations in support of the Danube Naval Flotilla with the objective of opening a way upstream for the flotilla. On 25—26 June,

surface warships of the Black Sea Fleet appeared off the Romanian port of Constanza and began an intensive artillery bombardment with the obvious intention of making a naval assault landing. At the same time the Danube Naval Flotilla began to carry out assault landing operations in the Danube Delta.

On 22 June, the garrison at the naval base at Hanko, on Finnish territory, instead of going over to a stonewall defence, initiated some sustained assault landing operations, and held nineteen Finnish islands for several days. On 25 June, in spite of the enormous losses which the Soviet Air Forces had sustained in the first hours of the war, 487 aircraft belonging to the Baltic and Arctic Fleets launched a surprise strike at Finnish airfields. Again in spite of these enormous losses, the Soviet air forces conducted themselves with exceptional valour and aggression. On 22 June the 1st Air Corps made a concentrated raid on military objectives in Königsberg.

None of this was improvisation. At 6.44 am on 22 June the Soviet Air Force was given the mission of operating in accordance with its plans, and for a few days it tried to do this. On 26 June, the 4th Air Corps began bombing raids on the Ploesti oilfields in Romania.

On 22 June 1941, the 41st Rifle Division of the 6th Army's 6th Rifle Corps, without waiting for orders from above, crossed the state frontier near Raval-Russkaya. That same morning, and without waiting for orders from Moscow, Colonel-General F. I. Kuznetsov, officer commanding the North-West Front, ordered his troops to launch an attack towards Tilsit in East Prussia. This decision came as no surprise either to the headquarters staff of the North-West Front or to the officers commanding the armies and their staffs, for a version of the attack on Tilsit had been played out in headquarters exercises held a few days previously, 'and it was very familiar to the commanders of the formations and their headquarters'. (Bor'ba za Sovetskuyu Pribaltiku, Eesti Raamat, Tallinn 1980, Vol. i, p. 67)

the commanders at tactical level were not entitled to know what their tasks would be, but in the senior headquarters, these tasks had been exactly defined and formulated, placed under seal in secret envelopes, and kept in the safe in every headquarters, up to and including the level of battalion. For instance, the Reconnaissance Battalion of the 27th Rifle Division, concentrated close to the frontier near the town of Augustow, was preparing to carry out combat reconnaissance in the direction of Suwalki. (Arkhiv MO SSSR, Archive 181, list 1631, item i, p. 128) The task of the Reconnaissance Battalion was to ensure the swift

advance of the entire 27th Division from near Augustow to Suwalki.

So using our two dangerous weapons - logic and common sense - let us attack now.

If the Soviet Union had no plans which the Army units could use in the event of an enemy attack on the country, if the military forces, when the enemy attacked, immediately went over the offensive themselves, when they were told by the Chief of Staff to attack, all Fronts, attack! ... What does that tell us the plans of the Soviet Union were in WW2?

End Game

Constantine Pleshakov, freely available in the USA, and at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com):

Stalin's decision to put the new defense line right on the border looked unbelievably foolish to Zhukov. He couldn't say so bluntly, but he was shockingly audacious in expressing his doubts. (...) The troops had also been placed too close to the border, where they could be hit by a sudden German attack. One area of Pavlov's military district, the Belostok salient, looked especially vulnerable, as the Red Army could easily be trapped by the attacking Germans.

(...)

It had been a while since a general had dared to doubt the wisdom of Stalin's decisions. The remarks caused an uproar. Pavlov venomously said that in Zhukov's military district the fortifications were being built right on the border as well. Voroshilov angrily advised Zhukov to mind his own business

Preparing for defensive warfare, a country never put its fortifications right on the border and never placed its army in narrow strips of territory like the Belostok salient, where it could be easily strangled by the enemy.

Only a few people in the room knew that Stalin's real plan was to skip defensive war altogether and strike at Germany first.

Joseph Stalin had many skeletons in his closet, but in January 1941 the preemptive war plan was his best guarded secret. (...) In strategic terms, an attack on Hitler looked both feasible and desirable. (...) Stalin was sure that the Fuhrer was still focusing on Britain, leaving his eastern flank relatively weak. Only after Germany finished in the West, Stalin argued, would Hitler send the bulk of his troops to the Soviet Union's border. He didn't believe that Hitler would risk a war on two fronts, **and common sense supported that view**, since such strategic arrogance had cost Germany a catastrophic defeat in World War I

In the summer of 1940, under Shaposhnikov's guidance, Vasilevsky started work on the preemptive strike plan. (...) The main task they envisaged for the Red Army sounded heavily preemptive: "to defeat the German forces concentrating in East Prussia and around Warsaw".

Vasilevsky was told to rewrite the draft. (...) In October, under Stalin's pressure, Timoshenko and Meretskov cancelled the attack in the north altogether (into Prussia and Poland - AG) and agreed that the Red Army should strike in the south (Romania - AG). Now the Army was expected "to cut Germany off from the Balkans in order to deprive it of paramount economic resources(...)" (i.e. Romanian oil from Ploesti)

The generals knew that the vozhd (leader, or fuhrer, in Russian - AG), favored the south as the major strategic theatre(...). The document suggested striking from the Ukraine and defeating the Germans' main force in southern Poland. The Kiev military district, transformed into a group called the Southwestern Front, was to lead the attack, its troops striking at Krakow (in German occupied Poland -AG) In accordance with Zhukov's megalomaniacal tendencies, the southwestern Front was to send about 1 million men and 8,000 tanks into battle. Romania would also be invaded.

The air force needed more planes along the frontier as well. The plan also noted that it was time to start working on the rear, establishing new hospitals and depots.

No date was given for the attack, but the document suggested finalizing preparations in 1942.

And then Rudolf Hess flew a Me-110 to Britain. Hess was a deputy fuhrer. **What that meant, is that he was officially second in command to Hitler.**

I will let you think on that for a minute. The number 2 person in Nazi Germany secretly flies himself to the UK, which is at war with Germany...

Back for more? OK!

Stalin, the ever suspicious, believed that Hitler and Churchill were secretly negotiating a separate peace. In 1940 this was a very attractive proposition to the British government, if you remember your official schoolbook version of history. According to Pleshakov, Stalin "simply

couldn't believe that the second in command in the Nazi Party had just flown a plane to Britain to negotiate an alliance with London because he was insane." (pg 80). I am having my doubts too about that whole mysterious episode. But what happened officially was that Hitler declared Hess insane, the British imprisoned him, denied him any opportunity to give interviews, *drugged him up to make him insane*, then finally he was killed in Spandau prison long after the war.

Needless to say, Hess' (and possibly Hitler's) desperate plan to make peace with the United Kingdom failed.

Regardless, Pleshakov states that: "Hess' defection was a **pivotal** moment that spring. After it happened, Stalin decided to accelerate war preparations. Whatever precipitated Hess' flight, he was now no longer sure he had until the summer of 1942. The Red Army had to be able to move sooner than that." (pg 81).

The relocation of seven armies to the west wouldn't solve the problem of manpower. however, at least two more were needed. Also, many existing units were heavily understaffed. In May and June, 800,000 reservists were quietly drafted. All military schools were ordered to finish early that year so the young lieutenants could be sent to the west.

The accelerated buildup suggested that the army would be ready to strike by midsummer (1941 -AG). The seven armies were expected to be in place by July 10(...).

In total, almost 3 million soldiers were deployed between the Baltic and the Black Sea. **That figure included eleven police regiments charged with imposing order on the territories that were to be occupied.** (...) Soon the districts were to be renamed "Fronts", as the tentative war plan was envisioned. The existence of a Front unambiguously implied war. The Russian language had no word for a front line mega unit during peace time; only a fighting army could have such a thing.

By June 20, the Red Army Propaganda Directorate prepared a secret document. Pleshakov: "It was quite explicit, saying that it was useless to build defenses against the German juggernaut, as the example of a number of European countries had proved, and that the Soviet Union would therefore 'apply an offensive strategy' against Germany" (pg 84).

Mikhail Kalinin, president of USSR (a ceremonial function), addressed the graduates of the Lenin Military Academy on June 5, 1941: "War is the time when you can expand communism!"

AmericanGoy disclaimer:

The biggest obstacle to the truth about this portion of WW2 history are

two arguments:

- 1) The apologists for the Soviet Union, who for various reasons want to see that country as a liberator of people oppressed under Nazi tyranny, just like the Western Allies were, do not want this to come to light.
- 2) The historians, who throughout their lives unerringly wrote one version of history, until it became so ingrained that it was considered heresy in professional historical circles to question the narrative.

There is also the third argument, that by arguing that Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union was in effect a pre-emptive war, that that somehow whitewashes Hitler and Nazi Germany's crimes, and so they are anti semitic in nature.

Which argument is simply bullshit.

Any amateur or serious student of history has to realize, **that both** Nazi Germany and Stalin's (and his successors) Soviet Union were tyrannical dictatorships, which used secret police to keep dissent down, which both tortured their political opponents and random victims, which both imprisoned millions of people. **Both killed millions of people.**

It is true that this historical information is used by modern neo-nazis to somehow whitewash Hitler's actions. Well, it does not make it so to this amateur historian...

To me, rooting for one side or the other in the Soviet-Nazi war is akin to a situation when two gangs in your home city are fighting a turf war over drug territory. Which gang would you root for - the Bloods or the Crips?

Or perhaps you would realize that both of them are one and the same...

Must see online resources:

Icebreaker **FULL** book (since it is impossible to buy it in America - I did not place this work online though): [Icebreaker, by Viktor Suvorov, real name Rezun](#) At the link, look to the right, you can download this as a PDF document or text... Not that I am advocating an obviously illegal action of downloading a book unavailable in the market off the internet, and whoever placed the Icebreaker's full version in English on the web should be ashamed of themselves! Harrumph, my good sir (or madam)! Harrumph I say!

Google preview book: [Pleshakov's Stalin's Folly](#)

Biography of the "historian troublemaker", nom de plume Viktor Suvorov:

[on the incredible internet resource Wikipedia.](#)

Bonus Material:

Haaretz article on [Mischa Shauli](#) :

Mischa Shauli sat at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., completely beside himself. It had been years since the first time he heard about the existence of a document said to prove that Stalin, not Hitler, bore the main responsibility for World War II, and for years he had searched for it with all his skills as a professional detective. Shauli's last position was as Commander Shauli, Representative of the Israel Police in Russia. Previous to that he had been head of the police fraud investigation unit for the Southern District.

A few years ago Shauli read "Icebreaker: Who Started the Second World War," by Bogdan Rozen. Rozen, who now lives in England, wrote it under the pseudonym of Viktor Suvorov. Shauli, impressed by the book, translated it into Hebrew and saw to its publication here.

From out of the sea of details, a coherent thesis emerges: Stalin dragged Hitler into war to force Europe into chaos and facilitate a communist revolution on the continent. According to Shauli, there is evidence to back up this theory, including a speech by Stalin himself as well as a report obtained by the U.S. Consulate in Prague. The report has been mentioned here and there over the years, but it has never been published, because no one knows where it is today.

Advertisement

Shauli, 59, believed that the definitive evidence was out there, hiding somewhere. He believed, and did not give up, repeatedly setting out to find it, going as far as Washington. No one is happier than he is today: The document is in his possession, and now the history of World War II may have to be rewritten: It was Stalin's fault.

The document, from October 1939, consists of three pages in English that purportedly reflect a dialogue in Moscow between a delegation from Czechoslovakia and a senior Soviet Foreign Ministry official. The Czechs tried to find out why the U.S.S.R. had signed the nonaggression treaty with Nazi Germany, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939. A few days later the Germans invaded Poland, and World War II began.

The Soviet official, Alexandrov by name, explained to the Czech delegation that had the Soviet Union signed an agreement with the West, Hitler would not have dared to launch a war, and without that war there would have been no possibility of imposing communism in Europe. He also listed the benefits to the Soviet Union of the pact with Nazi Germany, and of the war.

The veracity of the document must be proved, and even if it turns out to be genuine, its significance is worthy of debate. Mischa Shauli is

continuing his investigation. **No, he said this week, he does not fear that shifting responsibility for the war from Hitler to Stalin "acquits" Hitler; he is responsible for other crimes.**

Виктор Суворов. Спецназ

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Spetsnaz.

The Inside Story of the Soviet Special Forces

by Viktor Suvorov.

To Natasha and Alexander

Chapter 1. Spades and Men

Every infantryman in the Soviet Army carries with him a small spade. When he is given the order to halt he immediately lies flat and starts to dig a hole in the ground beside him. In three minutes he will have dug a little trench 15 centimetres deep, in which he can lie stretched out flat, so that bullets can whistle harmlessly over his head. The earth he has dug out forms a breastwork in front and at the side to act as an additional cover. If a tank drives over such a trench the soldier has a 50% chance that it will do him no harm. At any moment the soldier may be ordered to advance again and, shouting at the top of his voice, will rush ahead. If he is not ordered to advance, he digs in deeper and deeper. At first his trench can be used for firing in the lying position. Later it becomes a trench from which to fire in the kneeling position, and later still, when it is 110 centimetres deep, it can be used for firing in the standing position. The earth that has been dug out protects the soldier from bullets and fragments. He makes an embrasure in this breastwork into which he positions the barrel

of his gun. In the absence of any further commands he continues to work on his trench. He camouflages it. He starts to dig a trench to connect with his comrades to the left of him. He always digs from right to left, and in a few hours the unit has a trench linking all the riflemen's trenches together. The unit's trenches are linked with the trenches of other units. Dug-outs are built and communication trenches are added at the rear. The trenches are made deeper, covered over, camouflaged and reinforced. Then, suddenly, the order to advance comes again. The soldier emerges, shouting and swearing as loudly as he can.

The infantryman uses the same spade for digging graves for his fallen comrades. If he doesn't have an axe to hand he uses the spade to chop his bread when it is frozen hard as granite. He uses it as a paddle as he floats across wide rivers on a telegraph pole under enemy fire. And when he gets the order to halt, he again builds his impregnable fortress around himself. He knows how to dig the earth efficiently. He builds his fortress exactly as it should be. The spade is not just an instrument for digging: it can also be used for measuring. It is 50 centimetres long. Two spade lengths are a metre. The blade is 15 centimetres wide and 18 centimetres long. With these measurements in mind the soldier can measure anything he wishes.

The infantry spade does not have a folding handle, and this is a very important feature. It has to be a single monolithic object. All three of its edges are as sharp as a knife. It is painted with a green matt paint so as not to reflect the strong sunlight.

The spade is not only a tool and a measure. It is also a guarantee of the steadfastness of the infantry in the most difficult situations. If the infantry have a few hours to dig themselves in, it could take years to get them out of their holes and trenches, whatever modern weapons are used against them.

In this book we are not talking about the infantry but about soldiers belonging to other units, known as *spetsnaz*. These soldiers never dig trenches; in fact they never take up defensive positions. They either launch a sudden attack on an enemy or, if they meet with resistance or superior enemy forces, they disappear as quickly as they appeared and attack the enemy again where and when the enemy least expects them to appear.

Surprisingly, the *spetsnaz* soldiers also carry the little infantry spades. Why do they need them? It is practically impossible to describe in words how they use their spades. You really have to see what they do with them. In the hands of a *spetsnaz* soldier the spade is a terrible noiseless weapon and every member of *spetsnaz* gets much more training in the use of his spade than does the infantryman. The first thing he has to teach himself is precision: to split little slivers of wood with the edge of the spade or to cut off the neck of a bottle so that the bottle remains whole. He has to learn to love his spade and have faith in its accuracy. To do that he places his hand on the stump of a tree with the fingers spread out and takes a big swing at the stump with his right hand using the edge of the spade. Once he has learnt to use the spade well and truly as an axe he is taught more complicated things. The little spade can be used in hand-to-hand fighting against blows from a bayonet, a knife, a fist or another spade. A soldier armed with nothing but the spade is shut in a room without windows along

with a mad dog, which makes for an interesting contest. Finally a soldier is taught to throw the spade as accurately as he would use a sword or a battle-axe. It is a wonderful weapon for throwing, a single, well-balanced object, whose 32-centimetre handle acts as a lever for throwing. As it spins in flight it gives the spade accuracy and thrust. It becomes a terrifying weapon. If it lands in a tree it is not so easy to pull out again. Far more serious is it if it hits someone's skull, although *spetsnaz* members usually do not aim at the enemy's face but at his back. He will rarely see the blade coming, before it lands in the back of his neck or between his shoulder blades, smashing the bones.

The *spetsnaz* soldier loves his spade. He has more faith in its reliability and accuracy than he has in his Kalashnikov automatic. An interesting psychological detail has been observed in the kind of hand-to-hand confrontations which are the stock in trade of *spetsnaz*. If a soldier fires at an enemy armed with an automatic, the enemy also shoots at him. But if he doesn't fire at the enemy but throws a spade at him instead, the enemy simply drops his gun and jumps to one side.

This is a book about people who throw spades and about soldiers who work with spades more surely and more accurately than they do with spoons at a table. They do, of course, have other weapons besides their spades.

Chapter 2. *Spetsnaz* and the GRU

It is impossible to translate the Russian word *razvedka* precisely into any foreign language. It is usually rendered as 'reconnaissance' or 'spying' or 'intelligence gathering'. A fuller explanation of the word is that it describes any means and any actions aimed at obtaining information about an enemy, analysing it and understanding it properly.

Every Soviet military headquarters has its own machinery for gathering and analysing information about the enemy. The information thus collected and analysed about the enemy is passed on to other headquarters, higher up, lower down and on the same level, and each headquarters in turn receives information about the enemy not only from its own sources but also from the other headquarters.

If some military unit should be defeated in battle through its ignorance of the enemy, the commanding officer and his chief of staff have no right to blame the fact that they were not well enough informed about the enemy. The most important task for every commander and chief of staff is that, without waiting for information to arrive from elsewhere, they must organise their own sources of information about the enemy and warn their own forces and their superior headquarters of any danger that is threatened.

Spetsnaz is one of the forms of Soviet military *razvedka* which occupies a place somewhere between reconnaissance and intelligence.

It is the name given to the shock troops of *razvedka* in which there are combined elements of espionage, terrorism and large-scale partisan operations. In personal terms, this covers a very diverse range of people: secret agents recruited by Soviet military *razvedka* among foreigners for carrying out espionage and terrorist operations; professional units composed of the country's best sportsmen; and units made up of ordinary but carefully

selected and well trained soldiers. The higher the level of a given headquarters is, the more *spetsnaz* units it has at its disposal and the more professionals there are among the *spetsnaz* troops.

The term *spetsnaz* is a composite word made up from *spetsialnoye nakhacheniyeye*, meaning 'special purpose'. The name is well chosen. *Spetsnaz* differs from other forms of *razvedka* in that it not only seeks and finds important enemy targets, but in the majority of cases attacks and destroys them.

Spetsnaz has a long history, in which there have been periods of success and periods of decline. After the Second World War *spetsnaz* was in the doldrums, but from the mid-1950s a new era in the history of the organisation began with the West's new deployment of tactical nuclear weapons. This development created for the Soviet Army, which had always prepared itself, and still does, only for 'liberation' wars on foreign territory, a practically insuperable barrier. Soviet strategy could continue along the same lines only if the means could be found to remove Western tactical nuclear weapons from the path of the Soviet troops, without at the same time turning the enemy's territory into a nuclear desert.

The destruction of the tactical nuclear weapons which render Soviet aggression impossible or pointless could be carried out only if the whereabouts of all, or at least the majority, of the enemy's tactical nuclear weapons were established. But this in itself presented a tremendous problem. It is very easy to conceal tactical missiles, aircraft and nuclear artillery and, instead of deploying real missiles and guns, the enemy can deploy dummies, thus diverting the attention of Soviet *razvedka* and protecting the real tactical nuclear weapons under cover.

The Soviet high command therefore had to devise the sort of means of detection that could approach very close to the enemy's weapons and in each case provide a precise answer to the question of whether they were real, or just well produced dummies. But even if a tremendous number of nuclear batteries were discovered in good time, that did not solve the problem. In the time it takes for the transmission of the reports from the reconnaissance units to the headquarters, for the analysis of the information obtained and the preparation of the appropriate command for action, the battery can have changed position several times. So forces had to be created that would be able to seek out, find and destroy immediately the nuclear weapons discovered in the course of war or immediately before its outbreak.

Spetsnaz was, and is, precisely such an instrument, permitting commanding officers at army level and higher to establish independently the whereabouts of the enemy's most dangerous weapons and to destroy them on the spot.

Is it possible for *spetsnaz* to pinpoint and destroy every single one of the enemy's nuclear weapons? Of course not. So what is the solution to this problem? It is very simple. *Spetsnaz* has to make every effort to find and destroy the enemy's nuclear armament. Nuclear strength represents the teeth of the state and it has to be knocked out with the first blow, possibly even before the fighting begins. But if it proves impossible to knock out all the teeth with the first blow, then a blow has to be struck not just at the teeth but at the brain and nervous system of the state.

When we speak of the 'brain' we mean the country's most important statesmen and politicians. In this context the leaders of the opposition

parties are regarded as equally important candidates for destruction as the leaders of the party in power. The opposition is simply the state's reserve brain, and it would be silly to destroy the main decision-making system without putting the reserve system out of action. By the same token we mean, for example, the principal military leaders and police chiefs, the heads of the Church and trade unions and in general all the people who might at a critical moment appeal to the nation and who are well known to the nation.

By the 'nervous system' of the state we mean the principal centres and lines of government and military communications, and the commercial communications companies, including the main radio stations and television studios.

It would hardly be possible, of course, to destroy the brain, the nervous system and the teeth at once, but a simultaneous blow at all three of the most important organs could, in the opinion of the Soviet leaders, substantially reduce a nation's capacity for action in the event of war, especially at its initial and most critical stage. Some missiles will be destroyed and others will not be fired because there will be nobody to give the appropriate command or because the command will not be passed on in time due to the breakdown of communications.

Having within its sphere an organisation like *spetsnaz*, and having tested its potential on numerous exercises, the Soviet high command came to the conclusion that *spetsnaz* could be used with success not only against tactical but also against strategic nuclear installations: submarine bases, weapon stockpiles, aircraft bases and missile launching sites.

Spetsnaz could be used too, they realised, against the heart and blood supply of the state: ie. its source and distribution of energy -- power stations, transformer stations and power lines, as well as oil and gas pipelines and storage points, pumping station and oil refineries. Putting even a few of the enemy's more important power stations out of action could present him with a catastrophic situation. Not only would there be no light: factories would be brought to a standstill, lifts would cease to work, the refrigeration installations would be useless, hospitals would find it almost impossible to function, blood stored in refrigerators would begin to coagulate, traffic lights, petrol pumps and trains would come to a halt, computers would cease to operate.

Even this short list must lead to the conclusion that Soviet military *razvedka* (the GRU) and its integral *spetsnaz* is something more than the 'eyes and ears of the Soviet Army'. As a special branch of the GRU *spetsnaz* is intended primarily for action in time of war and in the very last days and hours before it breaks out. But *spetsnaz* is not idle in peacetime either. I am sometimes asked: if we are talking about terrorism on such a scale, we must be talking about the KGB. Not so. There are three good reasons why *spetsnaz* is a part of the GRU and not of the KGB. The first is that if the GRU and *spetsnaz* were to be removed from the Soviet Army and handed over to the KGB, it would be equivalent to blindfolding a strong man, while plugging his ears and depriving him of some other important organs, and making him fight with the information he needs for fighting provided by another person standing beside him and telling him the moves. The Soviet leaders have tried on more than one occasion to do this and it has always ended in catastrophe. The information provided by the secret police was always imprecise, late and insufficient, and the actions of a blind giant, predictably, were neither accurate or effective.

Secondly, if the functions of the GRU and *spetsnaz* were to be handed over to the KGB, then in the event of a catastrophe (inevitable in such a situation) any Soviet commanding officer or chief of staff could say that he had not had sufficient information about the enemy, that for example a vital aerodrome and a missile battery nearby had not been destroyed by the KGB's forces. These would be perfectly justified complaints, although it is in any case impossible to destroy every aerodrome, every missile battery and every command post because the supply of information in the course of battle is always insufficient. Any commanding officer who receives information about the enemy can think of a million supplementary questions to which there is no answer. There is only one way out of the situation, and that is to make every commanding officer responsible for gathering his own information about the enemy and to provide him with all the means for defeating his own enemy. Then, if the information is insufficient or some targets have not been destroyed, only he and his chief of staff are to blame. They must themselves organise the collection and interpretation of information about the enemy, so as to have, if not all the information, at least the most essential information at the right time. They must organise the operation of their forces so as to destroy the most important obstacles which the enemy has put in the way of their advance. This is the only way to ensure victory. The Soviet political leadership, the KGB and the military leaders have all had every opportunity to convince themselves that there is no other.

Thirdly, the Soviet secret police, the KGB, carries out different functions and has other priorities. It has its own terrorist apparatus, which includes an organisation very similar to *spetsnaz*, known as *osnaz*. The KGB uses *osnaz* for carrying out a range of tasks not dissimilar in many cases to those performed by the GRU's *spetsnaz*. But the Soviet leaders consider that it is best not to have any monopolies in the field of secret warfare. Competition, they feel, gives far better results than ration.

Osnaz is not a subject I propose to deal with in this book. Only a KGB officer directly connected with *osnaz* could describe what it is. My knowledge is very limited. But just as a book about Stalin would not be complete without some reference to Hitler, *osnaz* should not be overlooked here.

The term *osnaz* is usually met only in secret documents. In unclassified documents the term is written out in full as *osobogo nazhacheniya* or else reduced to the two letters 'ON'. In cases where a longer title is abbreviated the letters ON are run together with the preceding letters. For example, DON means 'division of *osnaz*', OON means a 'detachment of *osnaz*'.

The two words *osoby* and *spetsialny* are close in meaning but quite different words. In translation it is difficult to find a precise equivalent for these two words, which is why it is easier to use the terms *osnaz* and *spetsnaz* without translating them. *Osnaz* apparently came into being practically at the same time as the Communist dictatorship. In the very first moments of the existence of the Soviet regime we find references to detachments *osobogo nazhacheniya* -- special purpose detachments. *Osnaz* means military-terrorist units which came into being as shock troops of the Communist Party whose job was to defend the party. *Osnaz* was later handed over to the secret police, which changed its own name from time to time as easily as a snake changes its skin: Cheka -- VCheka -- OGPU -- NKVD -- NKGB -- MGB -- MVD -- KGB. Once a snake, however, always a snake.

It is the fact the *spetsnaz* belongs to the army, and *osnaz* to the

secret police, that accounts for all the differences between them. *Spetsnaz* operates mainly against external enemies; *osnaz* does the same but mainly in its own territory and against its own citizens. Even if both *spetsnaz* and *osnaz* are faced with carrying out one and the same operation the Soviet leadership is not inclined to rely so much on co-operation between the army and the secret police as on the strong competitive instincts between them.

Chapter 3. A History of *Spetsnaz*

In order to grasp the history behind *spetsnaz* it is useful to cast our minds back to the British Parliament in the time of Henry VIII. In 1516 a Member of the Parliament, Thomas More, published an excellent book entitled *Utopia*. In it he showed, simply and persuasively, that it was very easy to create a society in which universal justice reigned, but that the consequences of doing so would be terrible. More describes a society in which there is no private property and in which everything is controlled by the state. The state of Utopia is completely isolated from the outside world, as completely as the bureaucratic class rules the population. The supreme ruler is installed for his lifetime. The country itself, once a peninsula, has after monumental efforts on the part of the population and the army to build a deep canal dividing it from the rest of the world, become an island. Slavery has been introduced, but the rest of the population live no better than slaves. People do not have their own homes, with the result that anybody can at any time go into any home he wishes, a system which is worse even than the regulations in the Soviet Army today, in which the barracks of each company are open only to soldiers of that company.

In fact the system in Utopia begins to look more like that in a Soviet concentration camp. In Utopia, of course, it is laid down when people are to rise (at four o'clock in the morning), when they are to go to bed and how many minutes' rest they may have. Every day starts with public lectures. People must travel on a group passport, signed by the Mayor, and if they are caught without a passport outside their own district they are severely punished as deserters. Everybody keeps a close watch on his neighbour: 'Everyone has his eye on you.'

With fine English humour Thomas More describes the ways in which Utopia wages war. The whole population of Utopia, men and women, are trained to fight. Utopia wages only just wars in self-defence and, of course, for the liberation of other peoples. The people of Utopia consider it their right and their duty to establish a similarly just regime in neighbouring countries. Many of the surrounding countries have already been liberated and are now ruled, not by local leaders, but by administrators from Utopia. The liberation of the other peoples is carried out in the name of humanism. But Thomas More does not explain to us what this 'humanism' is. Utopia's allies, in receipt of military aid from her, turn the populations of the neighbouring states into slaves.

Utopia provokes conflicts and contradictions in the countries which have not yet been liberated. If someone in such a country speaks out in favour of capitulating to Utopia he can expect a big reward later. But

anyone who calls upon the people to fight Utopia can expect only slavery or death, with his property split up and distributed to those who capitulate and collaborate.

On the outbreak of war Utopia's agents in the enemy country post up in prominent places announcements concerning the reward to be paid to anyone killing the king. It is a tremendous sum of money. There is also a list of other people for whose murder large sums of money will be paid.

The direct result of these measures is that universal suspicion reigns in the enemy country.

Thomas More describes only one of the stratagems employed, but it is the most important:

When the battle is at its height a group of specially selected young men, who have sworn to stick together, try to knock out the enemy general. They keep hammering away at him by every possible method -- frontal attacks, ambushes, long-range archery, hand-to-hand combat. They bear down on him in a long, unbroken wedge-formation, the point of which is constantly renewed as tired men are replaced by fresh ones. As a result the general is nearly always killed or taken prisoner -- unless he saves his skin by running away.

It is the groups of 'specially selected young men' that I want to discuss in this book.

Four hundred years after the appearance of Utopia the frightful predictions of that wise Englishman became a reality in Russia. A successful attempt was made to create a society of universal justice. I had read Thomas More's frightening forecasts when I was still a child and I was amazed at the staggering realism with which Utopia was described and how strikingly similar it was to the Soviet Union: a place where all the towns looked like each other, people knew nothing about what was happening abroad or about fashion in clothes (everybody being dressed more or less the same), and so forth. More even described the situation of people 'who think differently'. In Utopia, he said, 'It is illegal for any such person to argue in defence of his beliefs.'

The Soviet Union is actually a very mild version of Utopia -- a sort of 'Utopia with a human face'. A person can travel in the Soviet Union without having an internal passport, and Soviet bureaucrats do not yet have such power over the family as their Utopia counterparts who added up the number of men and women in each household and, if they exceeded the number permitted, simply transferred the superfluous members to another house or even another town where there was a shortage of them.

The Communists genuinely have a great deal left to do before they bring society down to the level of Utopia. But much has already been done, especially in the military sphere, and in particular in the creation of 'specially selected groups of young men'.

It is interesting to note that such groups were formed even before the Red Army existed, before the Red Guard, and even before the Revolution. The origins of *spetsnaz* are to be found in the revolutionary terrorism of the nineteenth century, when numerous groups of young people were ready to commit murder, or possibly suicide, in the cause of creating a society in

which everything would be divided equally between everybody. As they went about murdering others or getting killed themselves they failed to understand one simple truth: that in order to create a just society you had to create a control mechanism. The juster the society one wants to build the more complete must be the control over production and consumption.

Many of the first leaders of the Red Army had been terrorists in the past, before the Revolution. For example, one of the outstanding organisers of the Red Army, Mikhail Frunze, after whom the principal Soviet military academy is named, had twice been sentenced to death before the Revolution. At the time it was by no means easy to get two death sentences. For organising a party which aimed at the overthrow of the existing regime by force, Lenin received only three years of deportation in which he lived well and comfortably and spent his time shooting, fishing and openly preaching revolution. And the woman terrorist Vera Zasulich, who murdered a provincial governor was acquitted by a Russian court. The court was independent of the state and reckoned that, if she had killed for political reasons, it meant that she had been prompted by her conscience and her beliefs and that her acts could not be regarded as a crime. In this climate Mikhail Frunze had managed to receive two death sentences. Neither of them was carried out, naturally. On both occasions the sentence was commuted to deportation, from which he had no great difficulty in escaping. It was while he was in exile that Frunze organised a circle of like-minded people which was called the 'Military Academy': a real school for terrorists, which drew up the first strategy to be followed up by armed detachments of Communists in the event of an uprising.

The seizure of power by the Bolsheviks demonstrated, primarily to the revolutionaries themselves, that it was possible to neutralise a vast country and then to bring it under control simply and quickly. What was needed were 'groups of specially selected young men' capable of putting out of action the government, the postal services, the telegraph and telephone, and the railway terminals and bridges in the capital. Paralysis at the centre meant that counteraction on the outskirts was split up. Outlying areas could be dealt with later one at a time.

Frunze was undoubtedly a brilliant theoretician and practitioner of the art of war, including partisan warfare and terrorism. During the Civil War he commanded an army and a number of fronts. After Trotsky's dismissal he took over as People's Commissar for military and naval affairs. During the war he reorganised the large but badly led partisan formations into regular divisions and armies which were subordinated to the strict centralised administration. At the same time, while commanding those formations, he kept sending relatively small but very reliable mobile units to fight in the enemy's rear.

The Civil War was fought over vast areas, a war of movement without a continuous stable front and with an enormous number of all sorts of armies, groups, independent detachments and bands. It was a partisan war in spirit and in content. Armies developed out of small, scattered detachments, and whenever they were defeated they were able to disintegrate into a large number of independent units which carried on the war on a partisan scale.

But we are not concerned here with the partisan war as a whole, only with the fighting units of the regular Red Army specially created for operating in the enemy's rear. Such units existed on various fronts and armies. They were not known as *spetsnaz*, but this did not alter their

essential nature, and it was not just Frunze who appreciated the importance of being able to use regular units in the rear of the enemy. Trotsky, Stalin, Voroshilov, Tukhachevsky, *inter alia*, supported the strategy and made extensive use of it.

Revolutionary war against the capitalist powers started immediately after the Bolsheviks seized power. As the Red Army 'liberated' fresh territory and arrived at the frontiers with other countries the amount of subversion directed against them increased. The end of the Civil War did not mean the end of the secret war being waged by the Communists against their neighbours. On the contrary, it was stepped up, because, once the Civil War was over, forces were released for other kinds of warfare.

Germany was the first target for revolution. It is interesting to recall that, as early as December 1917, a Communist newspaper *Die Fackel*, was being published in Petrograd with a circulation of 500,000 copies. In January 1918 a Communist group called 'Spartak' emerged in the same place. In April 1918 another newspaper *Die Weltrevolution*, began to appear. And finally, in August 1919, the famous paper of the German Communists, *Die Rote Fahne*, was founded in Moscow.

At the same time as the first Communist groups appeared, steps were taken to train terrorist fighting units of German Communists. These units were used for suppressing the anti-Communist resistance put up by Russian and Ukrainian peasants. Then, in 1920, all the units of German Communists were gathered together in the rear of the Red Army on the Western front. That was when the Red Army was preparing for a breakthrough across Poland and into Germany. The Red Army's official marching song, 'Budenny's March', included these words: 'We're taking Warsaw -- Take Berlin too!'

In that year the Bolsheviks did not succeed in organising revolution in Germany or even in 'liberating' Poland. At the time Soviet Russia was devastated by the First World War and by the far more terrible Civil War. Famine, typhus and destruction raged across the country. But in 1923 another attempt was made to provoke a revolution in Germany. Trotsky himself demanded in September 1923 to be relieved of all his Party and Government posts and to be sent as an ordinary soldier to the barricades of the German Revolution. The party did not send Trotsky there, but sent other Soviet Communist leaders, among them, Iosef Unshlikht. At the time he was deputy chairman of the Cheka secret police. Now he was appointed deputy head of the 'registration administration', now known as the GRU or military intelligence, and it was in this position that he was sent illegally to Germany. 'Unshlikht was given the task of organising the detachments which were to carry out the armed uprising and coup d'état, recruiting them and providing them with weapons. He also had the job of organising a German Cheka for the extermination of the bourgeoisie and opponents of the Revolution after the transfer of power.... This was how the planned Revolution was planned to take place. On the occasion of the anniversary of the Russian October Revolution the working masses were to come out on the streets for mass demonstrations. Unshlikht's "Red hundreds" were to provoke clashes with the police so as to cause bloodshed and more serious conflicts, to inflame the workers' indignation and carry out a general working-class uprising.'¹

¹ B. Bazhanov: 'Memoirs of a Secretary to Stalin', pub. *Tretya volna* 1980, pp 67-69.

In view of the instability of German Society at that time, the absence of a powerful army, the widespread discontent and the frequent outbursts of violence, especially in 1923, the plan might have been realised. Many experts are inclined to the view that Germany really was close to revolution. Soviet military intelligence and its terrorist units led by Unshlikht were expected to do no more than put the spark to the powder keg.

There were many reasons why the plans came to nothing. But there were two especially important ones: the absence of a common frontier between the USSR and Germany, and the split in the German Communist Party. The lack of a common frontier was at the time a serious obstacle to the penetration into Germany of substantial forces of Soviet subversives. Stalin understood this very well, and he was always fighting to have Poland crushed so that common frontiers could be established with Germany. When he succeeded in doing this in 1939, it was a risky step, since a common frontier with Germany meant that Germany could attack the USSR without warning, as indeed happened two years later. But without a common frontier Stalin could not get into Europe.

The split in the German Communist Party was an equally serious hindrance to the carrying out of Soviet plans. One group pursued policy, subservient to the Comintern and consequently to the Soviet Politburo, while the other pursued an antagonistic one. Zinoviev was 'extremely displeased by this and he raised the question in the Politburo of presenting Maslov *one of the dissenting German Communist leaders* with an ultimatum: either he would take a large sum of money, leave the party and get out of Germany, or Unshlikht would be given orders to liquidate him.'²

² Ibid. p. 68

At the same time as preparations were being made for revolution in Germany preparations were also going ahead for revolutions in other countries. For example, in September 1923, groups of terrorists trained in the USSR (of both Bulgarian and Soviet nationality) started causing disturbances in Bulgaria which could very well have developed into a state of general chaos and bloodletting. But the 'revolution' was suppressed and its ringleaders escaped to the Soviet Union. Eighteen months later, in April 1925, the attempt was repeated. This time unknown persons caused a tremendous explosion in the main cathedral in Sofia in the hope of killing the king and the whole government. Boris III had a miraculous escape, but attempts to destabilise Bulgaria by acts of terrorism continued until 1944, when the Red Army at last entered Bulgaria. Another miracle then seemed to take place, because from that moment on nobody has tried to shoot the Bulgarian rulers and no one has let off any bombs. The terror did continue, but it was aimed at the population of the country as a whole rather than the rulers. And then Bulgarian terrorism spread beyond the frontiers of the country and appeared on the streets of Western Europe.

The campaign of terrorism against Finland is closely linked with the name of the Finnish Communist Otto Kuusinen who was one of the leaders of the Communist revolt in Finland in 1918. After the defeat of the 'revolution' he escaped to Moscow and later returned to Finland for underground work. In 1921 he again fled to Moscow to save himself from

arrest. From that moment Kuusinen's career was closely linked with Soviet military intelligence officers. Kuusinen had an official post and did the same work: preparing for the overthrow of democracy in Finland and other countries. In his secret career Kuusinen had some notable successes. In the mid-1930s he rose to be deputy head of *Razvedupr* as the GRU was known then. Under Kuusinen's direction an effective espionage network was organised in the Scandinavian countries, and at the same time he directed the training of military units which were to carry out acts of terrorism in those countries. As early as the summer of 1918 an officer school was founded in Petrograd to train men for the 'Red Army of Finland'. This school later trained officers for other 'Red Armies' and became the International Military School -- an institute of higher education for terrorists.

After the Civil War was over Kuusinen insisted on carrying on underground warfare on Finnish territory and keeping the best units of Finnish Communists in existence. In 1939, after the Red Army invaded Finland, he proclaimed himself 'prime minister and minister of foreign affairs' of the 'Finnish Democratic Republic'. The 'government' included Mauri Rosenberg (from the GRU) as 'deputy prime minister', Axel Antila as 'minister of defence' and the NKVD interrogator Tuure Lekhen as 'minister of internal affairs'. But the Finnish people put up such resistance that the Kuusinen government's bid to turn Finland into a 'people's republic' was a failure.

(A curious fact of history must be mentioned here. When the Finnish Communists formed their government on Soviet territory and started a war against their own country, voluntary formations of Russians were formed in Finland which went into battle against both the Soviet and the Finnish Communists. A notable member of these genuinely voluntary units was Boris Bazhanov, formerly Stalin's personal secretary, who had fled to the West.)

Otto Kuusinen's unsuccessful attempt to become the ruler of Communist Finland did not bring his career to an end. He continued it with success, first in the GRU and later in the Department of Administrative Organs of the Central Committee of the CPSU -- the body that supervises all the espionage and terrorist institutions in the Soviet Union, as well as the prisons, concentration camps, courts and so forth. From 1957 until his death in 1964 Kuusinen was one of the most powerful leaders in the Soviet Union, serving simultaneously as a member of the Politburo and a Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party. In the Khodynki district of Moscow, where the GRU has its headquarters, one of the bigger streets is called Otto Kuusinen Street.

In the course of the Civil War and after it, Polish units, too, were formed and went into action on Soviet territory. One example was the 1st Revolutionary Regiment, 'Red Warsaw', which was used for putting down anti-Communist revolts in Moscow, Tambov and Yaroslavl. For suppressing anti-Communist revolts by the Russian population the Communists used a Yugoslav regiment, a Czechoslovak regiment, and many other formations, including Hungarians, Rumanians, Austrians and others. After the Civil War all these formations provided a base for the recruitment of spies and for setting up subversive combat detachments for operating on the territory of capitalist states. For example, a group of Hungarian Communist terrorists led by Ferenc Kryug, fought against Russian peasants in the Civil War; in the Second World War Kryug led a special purpose group operating in Hungary.

Apart from the 'internationalist' fighters, i.e. people of foreign

extraction, detachments were organised in the Soviet Union for operating abroad which were composed entirely, or very largely, of Soviet citizens. A bitter battle was fought between the army commanders and the secret police for control of these detachments.

On 2 August 1930 a small detachment of commando troops was dropped in the region of Voronezh and was supposed during the manoeuvres to carry out operations in the rear of the 'enemy'. Officially this is the date when Soviet airborne troops came into being. But it is also the date when *spetsnaz* was born. Airborne troops and *spetsnaz* troops subsequently went through a parallel development. At certain points in its history *spetsnaz* passed out of the control of military intelligence into the hands of the airborne forces, at others the airborne troops exercised administrative control while military intelligence had operational control. But in the end it was reckoned to be more expedient to hand *spetsnaz* over entirely to military intelligence. The progress of *spetsnaz* over the following thirty years cannot be studied in isolation from the development of the airborne forces.

1930 marked the beginning of a serious preoccupation with parachute troops in the USSR. In 1931 separate detachments of parachutists were made into battalions and a little later into regiments. In 1933 an *osnaz* brigade was formed in the Leningrad military district. It included a battalion of parachutists, a battalion of mechanised infantry, a battalion of artillery and three squadrons of aircraft. However, it turned out to be of little use to the Army, because it was not only too large and too awkward to manage, but also under the authority of the NKVD rather than the GRU. After a long dispute this brigade and several others created on the same pattern were reorganised into airborne brigades and handed over entirely to the Army.

To begin with, the airborne forces or VDV consisted of transport aircraft, airborne regiments and brigades, squadrons of heavy bombers and separate reconnaissance units. It is these reconnaissance units that are of interest to us. How many there were of them and how many men they included is not known. There is fragmentary information about their tactics and training. But it is known, for example, that one of the training schools was situated in Kiev. It was a secret school and operated under the disguise of a parachute club, while being completely under the control of the *Razvedupr* (GRU). It included a lot of women. In the course of the numerous manoeuvres that were held, the reconnaissance units were dropped in the rear of the 'enemy' and made attacks on his command points, headquarters, centres and lines of communications. It is known that terrorist techniques were already well advanced. For example, a mine had been developed for blowing up railway bridges as trains passed over them. However, bridges are always especially well guarded, so the experts of the *Razvedupr* and the Engineering Directorate of the Red Army produced a mine that could be laid on the tracks several kilometres away from the bridge. A passing train would pick up the mine which would detonate at the very moment when the train was on the bridge.

To give some idea of the scale of the VDV, on manoeuvres in 1934 900 men were dropped simultaneously by parachute. At the famous Kiev manoeuvres in 1935 no less than 1188 airborne troops were dropped at once, followed by a normal landing of 1765 men with light tanks, armoured cars and artillery. In Belorussia in 1936 there was an air drop of 1800 troops and a landing of 5700 men with heavy weapons. In the Moscow military district in the same

year the whole of the 84th rifle division was transferred from one place to another by air. Large-scale and well armed airborne attacks were always accompanied by the dropping in neighbouring districts of commando units which operated both in the interests of the security of the major force and in the interests of *Razvedupr*.

In 1938 the Soviet Union had six airborne brigades with a total of 18,000 men. This figure is, however, deceptive, since the strength of the 'separate reconnaissance units' is not known, nor are they included in that figure. Parachutists were also not trained by the Red Army alone but by 'civilian' clubs. In 1934 these clubs had 400 parachute towers from which members made up to half a million jumps, adding to their experience by jumps from planes and balloons. Many Western experts reckon that the Soviet Union entered the Second World War with a million trained parachutists, who could be used both as airborne troops and in special units -- in the language of today, in *spetsnaz*.

A continual, hotly contested struggle was going on in the General Staff of the Red Army. On what territory were the special detachments to operate -- on the enemy's territory, or on Soviet territory when it was occupied by the enemy?

For a long time the two policies existed side by side. Detachments were trained to operate both on home territory and enemy territory as part of the preparations to meet the enemy in the Western regions of the Soviet Union. These were carried out very seriously. First of all large partisan units were formed, made up of carefully screened and selected soldiers. The partisans went on living in the towns and villages, but went through their regular military training and were ready at any moment to take off into the forests. The units were only the basis upon which to develop much larger-scale partisan warfare. In peacetime they were made up largely of leaders and specialists; in the course of the fighting each unit was expected to expand into a huge formation consisting of several thousand men. For these formations hiding places were prepared in secluded locations and stocked with weapons, ammunition, means of communications and other necessary equipment.

Apart from the partisans who were to take to the forests a vast network of reconnaissance and commando troops was prepared. The local inhabitants were trained to carry out reconnaissance and terrorist operations and, if the enemy arrived, they were supposed to remain in place and pretend to submit to the enemy, and even work for him. These networks were supposed later to organise a fierce campaign of terror inside the enemy garrisons. To make it easier for the partisans and the terrorists to operate, secret communication networks and supplies were set up in peacetime, along with secret meeting places, underground hospitals, command posts and even arms factories.

To make it easier for the partisans to operate on their own territory a 'destruction zone' was created, also known as a 'death strip'. This was a strip running the length of the Western frontiers of the Soviet Union between 100 and 250 kilometres wide. Within that strip *all* bridges, railway depots, tunnels, water storage tanks and electric power stations were prepared for destruction by explosive. Also in peacetime major embankments

on railway lines and highways and cuttings through which the roads passed were made ready for blowing up. Means of communication, telephone lines, even the permanent way, all were prepared for destruction.

Immediately behind the 'death strip' came the 'Stalin Line' of exceptionally well fortified defences. The General Staff's idea was that the enemy should be exhausted in the 'death strip' on the vast minefields and huge obstacles and then get stuck on the line of fortifications. At the same time the partisans would be constantly attacking him in the rear.

It was a magnificent defence system. Bearing in mind the vast territories involved and the poor network of roads, such a system could well have made the whole of Soviet territory practically impassable for an enemy. But -- in 1939 the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact was signed.

The Pact was the signal for a tremendous expansion of Soviet military strength. Everything connected with defence was destroyed, while everything connected with offensive actions was expanded at a great rate, particularly Soviet sabotage troops and the airborne troops connected with them. In April 1941 five airborne corps were formed. All five were in the first strategic echelon of the Red Army, three facing Germany and two facing Rumania. The latter were more dangerous for Germany than the other three, because the dropping of even one airborne corps in Rumania and the cutting off, even temporarily, of supplies of oil to Germany meant the end of the war for the Germans.

Five airborne corps in 1941 was more than there were in all the other countries of the world together. But this was not enough for Stalin. There was a plan to create another five airborne corps, and the plan was carried out in August and September 1941. But in a defensive war Stalin did not, of course, need either the first five or the second five. Any discussion of Stalin's 'defence plans' must first of all explain how five airborne corps, let alone ten, could be used in a defensive war.

In a war on one's own territory it is far easier during a temporary retreat to leave partisan forces or even complete fighting formations hidden on the ground than it is to drop them in later by parachute. But Stalin had destroyed such formations, from which one can draw only one conclusion; Stalin had prepared the airborne corps specifically for dropping on other people's territory.

At the same time as the rapid expansion of the airborne forces there was an equally rapid growth of the special reconnaissance units intended for operations on enemy territory.

The great British strategist and historian B. H. Liddell Hart, dealing with this period, speaks of Hitler's fears concerning Stalin's intentions, referring to 'a fatal attack in the back from Russia'.³ And moves by the Soviet Union in June 1940 did evoke particular nervousness in the German high command. Germany had thrown all her forces against France at that time, and the Soviet Union rushed troops into the Baltic states and Bessarabia. The airborne troops especially distinguished themselves. In June 1940 the 214th Soviet airborne brigade was dropped with the idea of seizing a group of aerodromes in the region of Shaulyai in Lithuania, under a hundred kilometres from the East Prussian border. In the same month the 201st and 204th airborne brigades were dropped in Bessarabia to capture the towns of Ismail and Belgrad-Dnestrovsky. This was close by the Ploesti oilfields. What would Stalin do if the German Army advanced further into North Africa and the British Isles?

³ *Strategy. The Indirect Approach*, p.241.

It is easy to understand why Hitler took the decision in that next month, July 1940, to prepare for war against the USSR. It was quite impossible for him to move off the continent of Europe and into the British Isles or Africa, leaving Stalin with his huge army and terrifying airborne forces which were of no use to him for anything but a large-scale offensive.

Hitler guessed rightly what Stalin's plans were, as is apparent from his letter to Mussolini of 21 June 1941.⁴ Can we believe Hitler? In this case we probably can. The letter was not intended for publication and was never published in Hitler's lifetime. It is interesting in that it repeats the thought that Stalin had voiced at a secret meeting of the Central Committee. Moreover, in his speech at the 18th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party Stalin had had this to say about Britain and France; In their policy of nonintervention can be detected an attempt and a desire not to prevent the aggressors from doing their dirty work... not to prevent, let us say, Germany getting bogged down in European affairs and involved in a war... to let all the participants in the war get stuck deep in the mud of battle, to encourage them to do this on the quiet, to let them weaken and exhaust each other, and then, when they are sufficiently weakened, to enter the arena with fresh forces, acting of course "in the interests of peace", and to dictate their own conditions to the crippled participants in the war.⁵ Once again, he was attributing to others motives which impelled him in his ambitions. Stalin wanted Europe to exhaust itself. And Hitler understood that. But he understood too late. He should have understood before the Pact was signed.

⁴ 'I cannot take responsibility for the waiting any longer, because I cannot see any way that the danger will disappear.... The concentration of Soviet force is enormous.... All available Soviet armed forces are now on our border.... It is quite possible that Russia will try to destroy the Rumanian oilfields.'

⁵ *Pravda*, 11 March 1939.

However, Hitler still managed to upset Stalin's plans by starting the war first. The huge Soviet forces intended for the 'liberation' of Russia's neighbours were quite unnecessary in the war of defence against Germany. The airborne corps were used as ordinary infantry against the advancing German tanks. The many units and groups of airborne troops and commandos were forced to retreat or to dig trenches to halt the advancing German troops. The airborne troops trained for operations in the territory of foreign countries were able to be used in the enemy's rear, but not in his territory so much as in Soviet territory occupied by the German army.

The reshaping of the whole philosophy of the Red Army, which had been taught to conduct an offensive war on other people's territory, was very painful but relatively short. Six months later the Red Army had learnt to defend itself and in another year it had gone over to offensive operations. From that moment everything fell into place and the Red Army, created only for offensive operations, became once again victorious.

The process of reorganising the armed forces for operations on its own territory affected all branches of the services, including the special forces. At the beginning of 1942 thirteen guards battalions⁶ of *spetsnaz* were organised in the Red Army for operations in the enemy's rear, as well as one guards engineering brigade of *spetsnaz*, consisting of five battalions. The number of separate battalions corresponded exactly to the number of fighting fronts. Each front received one such battalion under its command. A guards brigade of *spetsnaz* remained at the disposal of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, to be used only with Stalin's personal permission in the most crucial locations.

⁶ In the Soviet Army the title of 'guards' can be won only in battle, the only exceptions being certain formations which were awarded the title when they were being formed. These included *spetsnaz* detachments.

So as not to reveal the real name of *spetsnaz*, the independent guards battalion and the brigade were given the code name of 'guards minelayers'. Only a very limited circle of people knew what the name concealed.

A special *razvedka* department was set up in the Intelligence directorate of each front to direct the work of the 'guards minelayers'. Each department had at its disposal a battalion of *spetsnaz*. Later the special *razvedka* departments began recruiting *spetsnaz* agents in territories occupied by the enemy. These agents were intended for providing support for the 'minelayers' when they appeared in the enemy rear. Subsequently each special *razvedka* department was provided with a reconnaissance point of *spetsnaz* to recruit agents.

The guards brigade of *spetsnaz* was headed by one of the outstanding Soviet practitioners of fighting in the rear of the enemy -- Colonel (later Lieutenant-General) Moshe Ioffe.

The number of *spetsnaz* increased very quickly. In unclassified Soviet writings we come across references to the 16th and the 33rd engineering brigade of *spetsnaz*. Apart from detachments operating behind the enemy's lines, other *spetsnaz* units were formed for different purposes: for example, radio battalions for destroying the enemy's radio links, spreading disinformation and tracing the whereabouts of enemy headquarters and communication centres so as to facilitate the work of the *spetsnaz* terrorist formations. It is known that from 1942 there existed the 130th, 131st, 132nd and 226th independent radio battalions of *spetsnaz*.

The operations carried out by the 'minelayers' were distinguished by their daring character and their effectiveness. They usually turned up behind the enemy's lines in small groups. Sometimes they operated independently, at others they combined their operations with the partisans. These joint operations always benefited both the partisans and *spetsnaz*. The minelayers taught the partisans the most difficult aspects of minelaying, the most complicated technology and the most advanced tactics. When they were with the partisans they had a reliable hiding place, protection while they carried out their operation, and medical and other aid in case of need. The partisans knew the area well and could serve as guides. It was an excellent combination: the local partisans who knew every tree in the forest, and the first-class technical equipment for the use of explosives demonstrated by real experts.

The 'guards minelayers' usually came on the scene for a short while,

did their work swiftly and well and then returned whence they had come. The principal way of transporting them behind the enemy's lines was to drop them by parachute. Their return was carried out by aircraft using secret partisan airfields, or they made their way by foot across the enemy's front line.

The high point in the partisan war against Germany consisted of two operations carried out in 1943. By that time, as a result of action by *osnaz*, order had been introduced into the partisan movement; it had been 'purged' and brought under rigid central control. As a result of *spetsnaz* work the partisan movement had been taught the latest methods of warfare and the most advanced techniques of sabotage.

The operation known as the 'War of the Rails' was carried out over six weeks from August to September 1943. It was a very fortunate time to have chosen. It was at that moment when the Soviet forces, having exhausted the German army in defensive battles at Kursk, themselves suddenly went over to the offensive. To support the advance a huge operation was undertaken in the rear of the enemy with the object of paralysing his supply routes, preventing him from bringing up ammunition and fuel for the troops, and making it impossible for him to move his reserves around. The operation involved the participation of 167 partisan units with a total strength of 100,000 men. All the units of *spetsnaz* were sent behind the enemy lines to help the partisans. More than 150 tons of explosives, more than 150 kilometres of wire and over half a million detonators were transported to the partisan units by air. The *spetsnaz* units were instructed to maintain a strict watch over the fulfilment of their tasks. Most of them operated independently in the most dangerous and important places, and they also appointed men from their units to instruct the partisan units in the use of explosives.

Operation 'War of the Rails' was carried out simultaneously in a territory with a front more than 1000 kilometres wide and more than 500 kilometres in depth. On the first night of the operation 42,000 explosions took place on the railway lines, and the partisan activity increased with every night that passed. The German high command threw in tremendous forces to defend their lines of communication, so that every night could be heard not only the sound of bridges and railway lines being blown up but also the sounds of battle with the German forces as the partisans fought their way through to whatever they had to destroy. Altogether, in the course of the operation 215,000 rails, 836 complete trains, 184 rail and 556 road bridges were blown up. A vast quantity of enemy equipment and ammunition was also destroyed.

Having won the enormous battle at Kursk, the Red Army sped towards the river Dnieper and crossed it in several places. A second large-scale operation in support of the advancing troops was carried out in the enemy's rear under the name of 'Concert', which was in concept and spirit a continuation of the 'War of the Rails'. In the final stage of that operation all the *spetsnaz* units were taken off to new areas and were enabled to rest along with the partisan formations which had not taken part in it. Now their time had come. Operation 'Concert' began on 19 September 1943. That night in Belorussia alone 19,903 rails were blown up. On the night of 25 September 15,809 rails were destroyed. All the *spetsnaz* units and 193 partisan units took part in the operation 'Concert'. The total number of participants in the operation exceeded 120,000. In the course of the whole operation, which went on until the end of October, 148,557 rails were destroyed, several

hundred trains with troops, weapons and ammunition were derailed, and hundreds of bridges were blown up. Despite a shortage of explosives and other material needed for such work, on the eve of the operation only eighty tons of explosives could be sent to the partisan. Nevertheless 'Concert' was a tremendous success.

After the Red Army moved into the territory of neighbouring states *spetsnaz* went through a radical reorganisation. The independent reconnaissance units, the reconnaissance posts which recruited agents for terrorist actions, and the independent radio battalions for conducting disinformation, were all retained in their entirety. There are plenty of references in the Soviet military press to operations by special intelligence units in the final stages of the war. For example, in the course of an operation in the Vistula-Oder area special groups from the Intelligence directorate of the headquarters of the 1st Ukrainian Front established the scope of the network of aerodromes and the exact position of the enemy's air bases, found the headquarters of the 4th Tank Army and the 17th Army, the 48th Tank Corps and the 42nd Army Corps, and also gathered a great deal of other very necessary information.

The detachments of 'guards minelayers' of *spetsnaz* were reformed, however, into regular guards sapper detachments and were used in that form until the end of the war. Only a relatively small number of 'guards minelayers' were kept in being and used behind the enemy lines in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Such a decision was absolutely right for the times. The main targets for *spetsnaz* operations had been the enemy's lines of communication. But that had been before the Red Army had started to advance at great speed. When that happened, there was no longer any need to blow up bridges. They needed to be captured and preserved, not destroyed. For this work the Red Army had separate shock brigades of motorised guards engineering troops which, operating jointly with the forward units, would capture especially important buildings and other objects, clear them of mines and defend them until the main force arrived. The guards formations of *spetsnaz* were used mainly for strengthening these special engineering brigades. Some of the surviving guards battalions of *spetsnaz* were transferred to the Far East where, in August 1945, they were used against the Japanese Army.

The use of *spetsnaz* in the Manchurian offensive of 1945 is of special interest, because it provides the best illustration of what was supposed to happen to Germany if she had not attacked the USSR.

Japan had a peace treaty with the Soviet Union. But Japan had gone to war with other states and had exhausted her military, economic and other resources. Japan had seized vast territories inhabited by hundreds of millions of people who wanted to be liberated and were ready to welcome and support any liberator who came along. Japan was in exactly the situation in which Stalin had wanted to see Germany: exhausted by war with other countries, and with troops scattered over expansive territories the populations of which hated the sight of them.

Thus, in the interests naturally of peace and humanity Stalin struck a sudden crushing blow at the armed forces of Japan in Manchuria and China, violating the treaty signed four years earlier. The operation took place over vast areas. In terms of the distances covered and the speed at which it moved, this operation has no equal in world history. Soviet troops operated over territories 5000 kilometres in width and 600-800 kilometres in depth.

More than a million and a half soldiers took part in the operation, with over 5000 tanks and nearly 4000 aircraft. It really was a lightning operation, in the course of which 84,000 Japanese officers and men were killed and 593,000 taken prisoner. A tremendous quantity of arms, ammunition and other equipment was seized.

It may be objected that Japan was already on the brink of catastrophe. That is true. But therein lies Soviet strategy: to remain neutral until such time as the enemy exhausts himself in battle against someone else, and then to strike a sudden blow. That is precisely how the war against Germany was planned and that was why the partisan units, the barriers and defensive installations were all dispensed with, and why the ten airborne corps were created in 1941.

In the Manchurian offensive the *spetsnaz* detachments put up their best performance. Twenty airborne landings were made not by airborne troops, but by special reconnaissance troops. *Spetsnaz* units of the Pacific Fleet were landed from submarines and surface boats. Some *spetsnaz* units crossed the frontier by foot, captured Japanese cars and used them for their operations. Worried about the railway tunnels on a strip of the 1st Far Eastern front, the Soviet high command created special units for capturing the tunnels. The groups crossed the frontier secretly, cut the throats of the guards, severed the wires connected to the explosive charges, and put the detonators out of action. They then held the tunnels until their own forces arrived.

In the course of the offensive a new and very risky type of operation was employed by *spetsnaz*. Senior GRU officers, with the rank of colonel or even major-general, were put in charge of small groups. Such a group would suddenly land on an airfield close to an important Japanese headquarters. The appearance of a Soviet colonel or general deep in the Japanese rear never failed to provoke astonished reactions from both the Japanese high command and the Japanese troops, as well as from the local population. The transport planes carrying these were escorted by Soviet fighter aircraft, but the fighters were soon obliged to return to their bases, leaving the Soviet transport undefended until it landed. Even after it landed it had at best only one high-ranking officer, the crew and no more than a platoon of soldiers to guard over the plane. The Soviet officer would demand and usually obtain a meeting with a Japanese general, at which he would demand the surrender of the Japanese garrison. He and his group really had nothing to back them up: Soviet troops were still hundreds of kilometres away and it was still weeks to the end of the war. But the local Japanese military leaders (and the Soviet officers too, for that matter) naturally did not realise this. Perhaps the Emperor had decided to fight on to the last man....

In several recorded instances, senior Japanese military leaders decided independently to surrender without having permission to do so from their superiors. The improvement in the morale and position of the Soviet troops can be imagined.

After the end of the Second World War *spetsnaz* practically ceased to exist for several years. Its reorganisation was eventually carried out under the direction of several generals who were fanatically devoted to the idea of *spetsnaz*. One of them was Viktor Kondratevich Kharchenko, who is quite

rightly regarded as the 'father' of the modern *spetsnaz*. Kharchenko was an outstanding sportsman and expert in the theory and practice of the use of explosives. In 1938 he graduated from the military electrotechnical academy which, apart from training specialists in communications, at that time also produced experts in the business of applying the most complicated way of blowing up buildings and other objectives. During the war he was chief of staff of the directorate of special works on the Western front. From May 1942 he was chief of staff on the independent guards *spetsnaz* brigade, and from June he was deputy commander of that brigade. In July 1944 his brigade was reorganised into an independent guards motorised engineering brigade.

Kharchenko was working in the General Staff after the war when he wrote a letter to Stalin, the basic point of which was: 'If before the outbreak of war our sportsmen who made up the *spetsnaz* units spent some time in Germany, Finland, Poland and other countries, they could be used in wartime in enemy territory with greater likelihood of success.' Many specialists in the Soviet Union now believe that Stalin put an end to the Soviet Union's self-imposed isolation in sport partly because of the effect Kharchenko's letter had on him.

In 1948 Kharchenko completed his studies at the Academy of the General Staff. From 1951 he headed the scientific research institute of the engineering troops. Under his direction major researches and experiments were carried out in an effort to develop new engineering equipment and armaments, especially for small detachments of saboteurs operating behind the enemy's lines.

In the immediate postwar years Kharchenko strove to demonstrate at the very highest level the necessity for reconstructing *spetsnaz* on a new technical level. He had a great many opponents. So then he decided not to argue any more. He selected a group of sportsmen from among the students at the engineering academy, succeeded in interesting them in his idea, and trained them personally for carrying out very difficult tasks. During manoeuvres held at the Totskyie camps, when on Marshal Zhukov's instructions a real nuclear explosion was carried out, and then the behaviour of the troops in conditions extremely close to real warfare was studied, Kharchenko decided to deploy his own group of men at his own risk.

The discussions that took place after the manoeuvres were, the senior officers all agreed, instructive -- all except General Kharchenko. He pointed out that in circumstances of actual warfare nothing of what they had been discussing would have taken place because, he said, a small group of trained people had been close to where the nuclear charges had been stored and had had every opportunity to destroy the transport when the charges were being moved from the store to the airfield. Moreover, he said, the officers who took the decision to use nuclear weapons could easily have been killed before they took the decision. Kharchenko produced proof in support of his statements. When this produced no magic results, Kharchenko repeated his 'act' at other major manoeuvres until his persistence paid off. Eventually he obtained permission to form a battalion for operations in the enemy's rear directed at his nuclear weapons and his command posts.

The battalion operated very successfully, and that was the beginning of the resurrection of *spetsnaz*. All the contemporary formations of *spetsnaz* have been created anew. That is why, unlike those which existed during the war, they are not honoured with the title of 'guards' units.⁷

⁷ Kharchenko himself moved steadily up the promotion ladder. From 1961 he was deputy to the Chief of Engineering troops and from February 1965 he was head of the same service. In 1972 he was promoted Marshal of engineering troops. Having attained such heights, however, Kharchenko did not forget his creation, and he was a frequent guest in the 'Olympic Village', the main *spetsnaz* training centre near Kirovograd. When he was killed in 1975 during the testing of a new weapon, his citations used the highest peacetime formula 'killed in the course of carrying out his official duties', which is very seldom met with in reference to this senior category of Soviet officers.

Chapter 4. The Fighting Units of *Spetsnaz*

Spetsnaz is made up of three distinct elements: the fighting units, the units of professional sportsmen and the network of secret agents. In numerical terms the fighting units of *spetsnaz* are the largest. They are composed of soldiers from the ranks, out of those who are especially strong, especially tough and especially loyal.

A factor that facilitates the selection process is that within the Soviet Army there exists a hidden system for the selection of soldiers. Long before they put on a military uniform, the millions of recruits are carefully screened and divided into categories in accordance with their political reliability, their physical and mental development, the extent of their political involvement, and the 'cleanliness' (from the Communist point of view) of their personal and family record. The Soviet soldier does not know to which category he belongs, and in fact he knows nothing about the existence of the various categories. If a soldier is included in a higher category than his comrades that does not necessarily mean that he is fortunate. On the contrary, the best thing for a soldier is to be put into the lowest category and to perform his two years of military service in some remote and God-forsaken pioneer battalion in which there is neither discipline nor supervision, or in units of which the officers have long since drunk away all the authority they had. The higher the category the soldier is put into the more difficult his military service will be.

Soldiers of the highest category make up the Kremlin guard, the troops protecting the government communications, the frontier troops of the KGB and *spetsnaz*. Being included in the highest category does not necessarily mean being posted to the Kremlin, to a *spetsnaz* brigade or to a government communications centre. The highest-category men selected by the local military authorities simply represent the best human material which is offered to the 'customer' for him to choose from. The 'customer' selects only what suits his need. All those who do not appeal to the customers move down to a lower level and are offered to representatives of the next echelon, that of the strategic missile troops, the airborne forces and crews of nuclear submarines.

The young soldier does not realise, of course, what is going on. He is simply summoned to a room where people he doesn't know ask him a lot of questions. A few days later he is called to the room again and finds a different set of strangers there who also ask him questions.

This system of sorting out recruits reminds one of the system of closed shops for leading comrades. The highest official has the first choice. Then his deputy can go to the shop and choose something from what remains. Then lower ranking officials are allowed into the shop, then their deputies, and so on. In this system *spetsnaz* rank as the very highest category.

The soldiers who have been picked out by *spetsnaz* officers are gathered together into groups and are convoyed by officers and sergeants to fighting units of *spetsnaz*, where they are formed into groups and go through an intensive course of training lasting several weeks. At the end of the course the soldier fires shots from his Kalashnikov automatic rifle for the first time and is then made to take the military oath. The best out of the group of young soldiers are then sent to a *spetsnaz* training unit from which they return six months later with the rank of sergeant, while the rest are posted to fighting units.

In *spetsnaz*, as throughout the Soviet Army, they observe the 'cult of the old soldier'. All soldiers are divided into *stariki* ('old men') and *salagi* ('small fry'). A real *salaga* is a soldier who has only just started his service. A really 'old man' (some twenty years' old) is one who is about to complete his service in a few months. A man who is neither a real *starik* nor a real *salaga* falls between the two, a *starik* being compared to anyone who has done less time than he has, and a *salaga* to anyone who has served in the army a few months longer than he.

Having been recruited into *spetsnaz*, the soldier has to sign an undertaking not to disclose secret information. He has no right ever to tell anyone where he has served or what his service consisted of. At most he has the right to say he served with the airborne corps. Disclosure of the secrets of *spetsnaz* is treated as high treason, punishable by death according to article 64 of the Soviet criminal code.

Once he has completed his two years' service in *spetsnaz* a soldier has three choices. He can become an officer, in which case he is offered special terms for entering the higher school for officers of the airborne forces in Ryazan. He can become a regular soldier in *spetsnaz*, for which he has to go through a number of supplementary courses. Or he has the option to join the reserve. If he chooses the last course he is regarded as being a member of the *spetsnaz* reserve and is with it for the next five years. Then, up to the age of 30, he is part of the airborne reserve. After that he is considered to belong to the ordinary infantry reserve until he is fifty. Like any other reserve force, the existence of a *spetsnaz* reserve makes it possible at a time of mobilisation to multiply the size of the *spetsnaz* fighting units with reservists if necessary.

Mud, nothing but mud all round, and it was pouring with rain. It had been raining throughout the summer, so that everything was wet and hanging limp. Everything was stuck in the mud. Every soldier's boot carried kilograms of it. But their bodies were covered in mud as well, and their hands and faces up to their ears and further. It was clear that the sergeant had not taken pity on the young *spetsnaz* recruits that day. They had been called up only a month before. They had been formed up into a provisional group and been put through a month's course for young soldiers which every one of them would remember all his life in his worst nightmare.

That morning they had been divided up into companies and platoons. Before letting them back into their mud-covered, sodden tent at the end of the day each sergeant had time to show his platoon the extent of his authority.

'Get inside!'

There were ten young men crowding around the entrance to a huge tent, as big as a prison barracks.

'Get inside, damn you!' The sergeant urged them on.

The first soldier thrust aside the heavy wet tarpaulin which served as a door and was about to enter when something stopped him. On the muddy, much trampled ground just inside the entrance a dazzlingly white towel had been laid down in place of a doormat. The soldier hesitated. But behind him the sergeant was pushing and shouting: 'Go on in, damn you!'

The soldier was not inclined to step on the towel. At the same time he couldn't make up his mind to jump over it, because the mud from his boots would inevitably land on the towel. Eventually he jumped, and the others jumped across the towel after him. For some reason no one dared to take the towel away. Everyone could see that there was some reason why it had been put there right in the entrance. A beautiful clean towel. With mud all around it. What was it doing there?

A whole platoon lived in one huge tent. The men slept in two-tier metal bunks. The top bunks were occupied by the *stariki* — the 'old men' of nineteen or even nineteen and a half, who had already served a year or even eighteen months in *spetsnaz*. The *salagi* slept on the bottom bunks. They had served only six months. By comparison with those who were now jumping over the towel they were of course *stariki* too. They had all in their day jumped awkwardly across the towel. Now they were watching silently, patiently and attentively to see how the new men behaved in that situation.

The new men behaved as anybody would in their situation. Some pushed from behind, and there was the towel in front. So they jumped, and clustered together in the centre of the tent, not knowing where to put their hands or where to look. It was strange. They seemed to want to look at the ground. All the young men behaved in exactly the same way: a jump, into the crowd and eyes down. But no -- the last soldier behaved quite differently. He burst into the tent, helped by a kick from the sergeant. On seeing the white towel he pulled himself up sharply, stood on it in his dirty boots and proceeded to wipe them as if he really were standing on a doormat. Having wiped his feet he didn't join the crowd but marched to the far corner of the tent where he had seen a spare bed.

'Is this mine?'

'It's yours,' the platoon shouted approvingly. 'Come here, mate, there's a better place here! Do you want to eat?'

That night all the young recruits would get beaten. And they would be beaten on the following nights. They would be driven out into the mud barefoot, and they would be made to sleep in the lavatories (standing up or lying down, as you wish). They would be beaten with belts, with slippers and with spoons, with anything suitable for causing pain. The *stariki* would use the *salagi* on which to ride horseback in battles with their friends. The *salagi* would clean the 'old men's weapons and do their dirty jobs for them. There would be the same goings-on as in the rest of the Soviet Army. *Stariki* everywhere play the same kind of tricks on the recruits. The rituals and the rules are the same everywhere. The *spetsnaz* differs from the other branches

only in that they place the dazzlingly clean towel at the entrance to the tent for the recruits to walk over. The sense of this particular ritual is clear and simple: We are nice people. We welcome you, young man, cordially into our friendly collective. Our work is very hard, the hardest in the whole army, but we do not let it harden our hearts. Come into our house, young man, and make yourself at home. We respect you and will spare nothing for you. You see -- we have even put the towel with which we wipe our faces for you to walk on in your dirty feet. So that's it, is it -- you don't accept our welcome? You reject our modest gift? You don't even wish to wipe your boots on what we wipe our faces with! What sort of people do you take us for? You may certainly not respect us, but why did you come into our house with dirty boots?

Only one of the *salagi*, the one who wiped his feet on the towel, will be able to sleep undisturbed. He will receive his full ration of food and will clean only his own weapon; and perhaps the *stariki* will give instructions that he should not do even that. There are many others in the platoon to do it.

Where on earth could a young eighteen-year-old soldier have learnt about the *spetsnaz* tradition? Where could he have heard about the white towel? *Spetsnaz* is a secret organisation which treasures its traditions and keeps them to itself. A former *spetsnaz* soldier must never tell tales: he'll lose his tongue if he does. In any case he is unlikely to tell anyone about the towel trick, especially someone who has yet to be called up. I was beaten up, so let him be beaten up as well, he reasons.

There are only three possible ways the young soldier could have found out about the towel. Either he simply guessed what was happening himself. The towel had been laid down at the entrance, so it must be to wipe his feet on. What else could it be for? Or perhaps his elder brother had been through the *spetsnaz*. He had, of course, never called it by that name or said what it was for, but he might have said about the towel: 'Watch out, brother, there are some units that have very strange customs.... But just take care -- if you let on I'll knock your head off. And I can.' Or his elder brother might have spent some time in a penal battalion. Perhaps he had been in *spetsnaz* and in a penal battalion. For the custom of laying out a towel in the entrance before the arrival of recruits did not originate in *spetsnaz* but in the penal battalions. It is possible that it was handed on to the present-day penal battalions from the prisons of the past.

The links between *spetsnaz* and the penal battalions are invisible, but they are many and very strong.

In the first place, service in *spetsnaz* is the toughest form of service in the Soviet Army. The physical and psychological demands are not only increased deliberately to the very highest point that a man can bear; they are frequently, and also deliberately, taken beyond any permissible limits. It is quite understandable that a *spetsnaz* soldier should find he cannot withstand these extreme demands and breaks down. The breakdown may take many different forms: suicide, severe depression, hysteria, madness or desertion. As I was leaving an intelligence unit of a military district on promotion to Moscow I suddenly came across, on a little railway station, a *spetsnaz* officer I knew being escorted by two armed soldiers.

'What on earth are you doing here?' I exclaimed. 'You don't see people on this station more than once in a month!'

'One of my men ran away!'

'A new recruit?'

'That's the trouble, he's a *starik*. Only another month to go.'

'Did he take his weapon?'

'No, he went without it.'

I expressed my surprise, wished the lieutenant luck and went on my way. How the search ended I do not know. At the very next station soldiers of the Interior Ministry's troops were searching the carriages. The alarm had gone out all over the district.

Men run away from *spetsnaz* more often than from other branches of the services. But it is usually a case of a new recruit who has been stretched to the limit and who usually takes a rifle with him. A man like that will kill anyone who gets in his path. But he is usually quickly run down and killed. But in this case it was a *starik* who had run off, and without a rifle. Where had he gone, and why? I didn't know. Did they find him? I didn't know that either. Of course they found him. They are good at that. If he wasn't carrying a rifle he would not have been killed. They don't kill people without reason. So what could he expect? Two years in a penal battalion and then the month in *spetsnaz* that he had not completed.

Spetsnaz has no distinguishing badge or insignia -- officially, at any rate. But unofficially the *spetsnaz* badge is a wolf, or rather a pack of wolves. The wolf is a strong, proud animal which is remarkable for its quite incredible powers of endurance. A wolf can run for hours through deep snow at great speed, and then, when he scents his prey, put on another astonishing burst of speed. Sometimes he will chase his prey for days, reducing it to a state of exhaustion. Exploiting their great capacity for endurance, wolves first exhaust and then attack animals noted for their tremendous strength, such as the elk. People say rightly that the 'wolf lives on its legs'. Wolves will bring down a huge elk, not so much by the strength of their teeth as by the strength of their legs.

The wolf also has a powerful intellect. He is proud and independent. You can tame and domesticate a squirrel, a fox or even a great elk with bloodshot eyes. And there are many animals that can be trained to perform. A performing bear can do really miraculous things. But you cannot tame a wolf or train it to perform. The wolf lives in a pack, a closely knit and well organised fighting unit of frightful predators. The tactics of a wolf pack are the very embodiment of flexibility and daring. The wolves' tactics are an enormous collection of various tricks and combinations, a mixture of cunning and strength, confusing manoeuvres and sudden attacks.

No other animal in the world could better serve as a symbol of the *spetsnaz*. And there is good reason why the training of a *spetsnaz* soldier starts with the training of his legs. A man is as strong and young as his legs are strong and young. If a man has a sloppy way of walking and if he drags his feet along the ground, that means he himself is weak. On the other hand, a dancing, springy gait is a sure sign of physical and mental health. *Spetsnaz* soldiers are often dressed up in the uniform of other branches of the services and stationed in the same military camps as other especially secret units, usually with communications troops. But one doesn't need any special experience to pick out the *spetsnaz* man from the crowd. You can tell him by the way he walks. I shall never forget one soldier who was known as 'The Spring'. He was not very tall, slightly stooping and round-shouldered. But his feet were never still. He kept dancing about the whole time. He gave the impression of being restrained only by some invisible string, and if the

string were cut the soldier would go on jumping, running and dancing and never stop. The military commissariat whose job it was to select the young soldiers and sort them out paid no attention to him and he fetched up in an army missile brigade. He had served almost a year there when the brigade had to take part in manoeuvres in which a *spetsnaz* company was used against them. When the exercise was over the *spetsnaz* company was fed there in the forest next to the missile troops. The officer commanding the *spetsnaz* company noticed the soldier in the missile unit who kept dancing about all the time he was standing in the queue for his soup.

'Come over here, soldier.' The officer drew a line on the ground. 'Now jump.'

The soldier stood on the line and jumped from there, without any run-up. The company commander did not have anything with him to measure the length of the jump, but there was no need. The officer was experienced in such things and knew what was good and what was excellent.

'Get into my car!'

'I cannot, comrade major, without my officer's permission.'

'Get in and don't worry, you'll be all right with me. I will speak up for you and tell the right people where you have been.'

The company commander made the soldier get into his car and an hour later presented him to the chief of army intelligence, saying:

'Comrade colonel, look what I've found among the missile troops.'

'Now then, young man, let's see you jump.'

The soldier jumped from the spot. This time there was a tape measure handy and it showed he had jumped 241 centimetres.

'Take the soldier into your lot and find him the right sort of cap,' the colonel said.

The commander of the *spetsnaz* company took off his own blue beret and gave it to the soldier. The chief of intelligence immediately phoned the chief of staff of the army, who gave the appropriate order to the missile brigade -- forget you ever had such a man.

The dancing soldier was given the nickname 'The Spring' on account of his flexibility. He had never previously taken a serious interest in sport, but he was a born athlete. Under the direction of experienced trainers his talents were revealed and he immediately performed brilliantly. A year later, when he completed his military service, he was already clearing 2 metres 90 centimetres. He was invited to join the professional athletic service of *spetsnaz*, and he agreed.

The long jump with no run has been undeservedly forgotten and is no longer included in the programme of official competitions. When it was included in the Olympic Games the record set in 1908, was 3 metres 33 centimetres. As an athletic skill the long jump without a run is the most reliable indication of the strength of a person's legs. And the strength of his legs is a reliable indicator of the whole physical condition of a soldier. Practically half a person's muscles are to be found in his legs. *Spetsnaz* devotes colossal attention to developing the legs of its men, using many simple but very effective exercises: running upstairs, jumping with ankles tied together up a few steps and down again, running up steep sandy slopes, jumping down from a great height, leaping from moving cars and trains, knee-bending with a barbell on the shoulders, and of course the jump from a spot. At the end of the 1970s the *spetsnaz* record in this exercise, which has not been recognised by the official sports authorities, was 3

metres 51 centimetres.

A *spetsnaz* soldier knows that he is invincible. This may be a matter of opinion, but other people's opinions do not interest the soldier. He knows himself that he is invincible and that's enough for him. The idea is instilled into him carefully, delicately, not too insistently, but continually and effectively. The process of psychological training is inseparably linked to the physical toughening. The development of a spirit of self-confidence and of independence and of a feeling of superiority over any opponent is carried out at the same time as the development of the heart, the muscles and the lungs. The most important element in training a *spetsnaz* soldier is to make him believe in his own strength.

A man's potential is unlimited, the reasoning goes. A man can reach any heights in life in any sphere of activity. But in order to defeat his opponents a man must first overcome himself, combat his own fears, his lack of confidence and laziness. The path upwards is one of continual battle with oneself. A man must force himself to rise sooner than the others and go to bed later. He must exclude from his life everything that prevents him from achieving his objective. He must subordinate the whole of his existence to the strictest regime. He must give up taking days off. He must use his time to the best possible advantage and fit in even more than was thought possible. A man aiming for a particular target can succeed only if he uses every minute of his life to the maximum advantage for carrying out his plan. A man should find four hours' sleep quite sufficient, and the rest of his time can be used for concentrating on the achievement of his objective.

I imagine that to instil this psychology into a mass army formed by means of compulsory mobilisation would be impossible and probably unnecessary. But in separate units carefully composed of the best human material such a philosophy is entirely acceptable.

In numbers *spetsnaz* amounts to less than one per cent of all the Soviet armed forces in peacetime. *Spetsnaz* is the best, carefully selected part of the armed forces, and the philosophy of each man's unlimited potential has been adopted in its entirety by every member of the organisation. It is a philosophy which cannot be put into words. The soldier grasps it not with his head, but with his feet, his shoulders and his sweat. He soon becomes convinced that the path to victory and self-perfection is a battle with himself, with his own mental and physical weakness. Training of any kind makes sense only if it brings a man to the very brink of his physical and mental powers. To begin with, he must know precisely the limits of his capabilities. For example: he can do 40 press-ups. He must know this figure precisely and that it really is the limit of his capacity. No matter how he strains he can do no more. But every training session is a cruel battle to beat his previous record. As he starts a training session a soldier has to promise himself that he will beat his own record today or die in the attempt.

The only people who become champions are those who go into each training session as if they are going to their death or to their last battle in which they will either win or die. The victor is the one for whom victory is more important than life. The victor is the one who dives a centimetre deeper than his maximum depth, knowing that his lungs will not hold out and that death lies beyond his limit. And once he has overcome the fear of death, the next time he will dive even deeper! *Spetsnaz* senior lieutenant Vladimir Salnikov, world champion and Olympic champion swimmer, repeats the

slogan every day: conquer yourself, and that was why he defeated everyone at the Olympic Games.

An excellent place to get to know and to overcome oneself is the 'Devil's Ditch' which has been dug at the *spetsnaz* central training centre near Kirovograd. It is a ditch with metal spikes stuck into the bottom. The narrowest width is three metres. From there it gets wider and wider.

Nobody is forced to jump the ditch. But if someone wants to test himself, to conquer himself and to overcome his own cowardice, let him go and jump. It can be a standing jump or a running jump, in running shoes and a track suit, with heavy boots and a big rucksack on your back, or carrying a weapon. It is up to you. You start jumping at the narrow part and gradually move outwards. If you make a mistake, trip on something or don't reach the other side you land with your side on the spikes.

There are not many who wanted to risk their guts at the Devil's Ditch, until a strict warning was put up: 'Only for real *spetsnaz* fighters!' Now nobody has to be invited to try it. There are always plenty of people there and always somebody jumping, summer and winter, on slippery mud and snow, in gas-masks and without them, carrying an ammunition box, hand-in-hand, with hands tied together, and even with someone on the back. The man who jumps the Devil's Ditch has confidence in himself, considers himself invincible, and has grounds for doing so.

The relations within *spetsnaz* units are very similar to those within the wolf pack. We do not know everything about the habits and the ways of wolves. But I have heard Soviet zoologists talk about the life and behaviour of wolves and, listening to them, I have been reminded of *spetsnaz*. They say the wolf has not only a very developed brain but is also the noblest of all the living things inhabiting our planet. The mental capacity of the wolf is reckoned to be far greater than the dog's. What I have heard from experts who have spent their whole lives in the taiga of the Ussuri, coming across wolves every day, is sharply at odds with what people say about them who have seen them only in zoos.

The experts say that the she-wolf never kills her sickly wolf-cubs. She makes her other cubs do it. The she-wolf herself gives the cubs the first lesson in hunting in a group. And the cubs' first victim is their weaker brother. But once the weaker ones are disposed of, the she-wolf protects the rest. In case of danger she would rather sacrifice herself than let anyone harm them. By destroying the weaker cubs the she-wolf preserves the purity and strength of her offspring, permitting only the strong to live. This is very close to the process of selection within *spetsnaz*. At the outset the weaker soldier is naturally not killed but thrown out of *spetsnaz* into a more restful service. When a unit is carrying out a serious operation behind enemy lines, however, the wolf-cubs of *spetsnaz* will kill their comrade without a second thought if he appears to weaken. The killing of the weak is not the result of a court decision but of lynch law. It may appear to be an act of barbarism, but it is only by doing so that the wolves have retained their strength for millions of years and remained masters of the forests until such a time as an even more frightful predator -- man -- started to destroy them on a massive scale.

But the she-wolf has also another reputation, and it is no accident that the Romans for centuries had a she-wolf as the symbol of their empire. A strong, wise, cruel and at the same time caring and affectionate she-wolf reared two human cubs: could there be a more striking symbol of love and

strength?

Within their pack the wolves conduct a running battle to gain a higher place in the hierarchy. And I never saw anything inside *spetsnaz* that could be described as soldier's friendship, at least nothing like what I had seen among the tank troops and the infantry. Within *spetsnaz* a bitter battle goes on for a place in the pack, closer to the leader and even in the leader's place. In the course of this bitter battle for a place in the pack the *spetsnaz* soldier is sometimes capable of displaying such strength of character as I have never seen elsewhere.

The beating up of the young recruits who are just starting their service is an effort on the part of the *stariki* to preserve their dominating position in the section, platoon or company. But among the recruits too there is right from the beginning a no less bitter battle going on for priority. This struggle takes the form of continual fighting between groups and individuals. Even among the *stariki* not everyone is not on the same level: they also have their various levels of seniority. The more senior levels strive to keep the inferior ones under their control. The inferior ones try to extract themselves from that control. It is very difficult, because if a young soldier tries to oppose someone who has served half a year more than he has, the longer-serving man will be supported not only by the whole of his class but also by the other senior classes: the *salaga* is not only offending a soldier senior to himself (never mind who he is and what the older ones think of him) but is also undermining the whole tradition established over the decades in *spetsnaz* and the rest of the Soviet Army. In spite of all this, attempts at protest by the inferior classes occur regularly and are sometimes successful.

I recall a soldier of enormous physique and brutal features known as 'The Demon' who, after serving for half a year, got together a group of soldiers from all the classes and lorded it over not just his own platoon but the whole company. He was good at sensing the mood of a company. He and his group never attacked *stariki* in normal circumstances. They would wait patiently until one of the *stariki* did something which by *spetsnaz* standards is considered a disgrace, like stealing. Only then would they set about him, usually at night. The Demon was skilful at making use of provocation. For example, having stolen a bottle of aftershave from a soldier, he would slip it to one of his enemies. There is no theft in *spetsnaz*. The thief is, then, always discovered very quickly and punished mercilessly. And The Demon was, of course, in charge of the punitive action.

But seniority in *spetsnaz* units is not determined only by means of fists. In The Demon's group there was a soldier known as 'The Squint', a man of medium height and build. I do not know how it came about, but it soon became apparent that, although The Demon was lording it over the whole company, he never opposed The Squint. One day The Squint made fun of him in public, drawing attention to his ugly nostrils. There was some mild laughter in the company and The Demon was clearly humiliated, but for some reason he did not choose to exercise his strength. The Squint soon came to dominate the whole company, but it never occurred to him to fight anyone or to order anybody about. He simply told The Demon out loud what he wanted, and The Demon used his strength to influence the whole company. This went on for about three months. How the system worked and why, was not for us officers to know. We watched what was going on from the sidelines, neither interfering nor trying to look too closely into it.

But then there was a revolution. Someone caught The Demon out in a provocation. The Demon again stole something and slipped it to one of his *stariki*, and he was found out. The Demon and The Squint and their closest friends were beaten all night until the duty officer intervened. The Demon and The Squint were locked up temporarily in a store where they kept barrels of petrol. They kept them there for several days because the likelihood of a bloody settling of accounts was considerable. Meanwhile the whole affair was reported to the chief of Intelligence for the district. Knowing the way things were done in *spetsnaz*, he decided that both men should be tried by a military tribunal. The result was a foregone conclusion. As usual the tribunal did not hear the true causes of the affair. The officer commanding the company simply put together a number of minor offences: being late on parade, late for inspection, found in a drunken state, and so forth. The whole company confirmed everything in their evidence, and the accused made no attempt to deny the charges. Yet there was some rough justice in the process, because they probably both deserved their sentences of eighteen months in a penal battalion.

The silent majority can put up with anything for a long time. But sometimes a spark lands in the powder keg and there is a frightful explosion. Often in *spetsnaz* a group of especially strong and bullying soldiers will dominate the scene for a certain time, until suddenly a terrible counter blow is struck, whereupon the group is broken up into pieces and its members, scorned and disliked, have to give way to another group.

In every company there are a few soldiers who do not try to dominate the rest, who do not voice their opinions and who do not try to achieve great influence. At the same time everyone is aware of some enormous hidden strength in them, and no one dares to touch them. This kind of soldier is usually found somewhere near the top of the platoon's hierarchy, rarely at the very top.

I remember a soldier known as 'The Machine'. He always kept himself to himself. He probably experienced no great emotions, and by *spetsnaz* standards he was probably too kind and placid a person. He did his job properly and seemed never to experience in his work either enthusiasm or resentment. Nobody, not even The Demon, dared touch The Machine. On one occasion, when The Demon was beating up one of the young soldiers, The Machine went up to him and said, 'That's enough of that.' The Demon did not argue, but stopped what he was doing and moved away. The Machine reverted to silence.

It was clear to everyone that The Machine's dislike of The Demon had not been given its full expression. And so it was. On the night when the whole company beat up The Demon and The Squint, The Machine lay on his bed and took no part in the beating. Finally his patience gave out, he went to the toilet where the sentence was being carried out, pushed the crowd aside with his enormous hands and said, 'Let me give him a punch.'

He gave The Demon a blow in the stomach with his mighty fist. Everyone thought he had killed the man, who bent double and collapsed in a heap like a wooden puppet with string instead of joints. They poured water over him and for half an hour afterwards did not strike him. They were afraid of

finishing it off, afraid they would be tried for murder. Then they saw that The Demon had survived and they continued to beat him. Quite aloof from the squabble for top position in the company, The Machine had gone straight back to bed.

In the same company there was a soldier known as 'The Otter'; slim, well built, handsome. He was not very big and appeared to have little strength. But he was like a sprung steel plate. His strength seemed to be explosive. He had amazing reactions. When, as a recruit, he first jumped over the towel, he was subjected to the usual treatment by the *stariki*. 'Drop your pants and lie down,' they said. He took hold of his belt as though he was ready to carry out their orders. They dropped their guard, and at that moment The Otter struck one of them in the mouth with such a blow that his victim fell to the ground and was knocked senseless. While he was falling The Otter struck another one in the teeth. A third backed out of the way.

That night, when he was asleep, they bound him in a blanket and beat him up brutally. They beat him the second night, and the third, and again and again. But he was a very unusual person even by *spetsnaz* standards. He possessed rather unusual muscles. When they were relaxed they looked like wet rags. He suffered a lot of beatings, but one had the impression that when he was relaxed he felt no pain. Perhaps there were qualities in his character that put him above the standards we were used to. When The Otter slept he was then in the power of the *stariki* and they did not spare him. They attacked him in the dark, so that he should not recognise his attackers. But he knew all of them instinctively. He never quarrelled with them and he always avoided groups of them. If they attacked him in the daylight he made no great effort to resist. But if he came across a *stariki* on his own he would punch him in the teeth. If he came across him again he would do the same again. He could knock a man's teeth out. He would strike suddenly and like lightning. He would be standing relaxed, his arms hanging down, looking at the ground. Then suddenly there would be a frightful, shattering blow. On several occasions he punched *stariki* in the presence of the whole company and sometimes even with officers present. How beautifully he punched them! If there were officers present the company commander would admire The Otter and indicate his approval with a smile on his face -- then sentence him to three days in the guard room, because they were not allowed to hit each other.

This went on for a long time, until the *stariki* became tired of it all and left him alone. Nobody touched him any more. Six months later they offered him a place at the very top. He refused, still keeping his silence. He never got involved in the affairs of the platoon and had no desire and no claim to be a leader. When the whole company was beating up The Demon The Otter did not join in. Some years later I met a *spetsnaz* man I knew and learnt that The Machine had been offered a job with the professional athletic service. He had refused and had gone back to some remote Siberian village where his home was. But The Otter had accepted the offer and is now serving in one of the best *spetsnaz* formations, training for the ultimate job of assassinating key political and military figures on the enemy's side.

There are other ways in which a *spetsnaz* soldier can defend his

position in the hierarchy, apart from punching people in the face. *Spetsnaz* respects people who take risks, who have strength and display courage. A man who will jump further than others on a motorcycle, or one who will wait longer than others to open his parachute, or one who hammers nails into a plank with the palm of his hand -- such people are assured of respect. A man who goes on running in spite of tiredness when all the others are collapsing, who can go longer than others without food and drink, who can shoot better than the others -- such people are also well thought of. But when everybody is thought highly of, there is still a struggle among the best. And if there is no other way for a man to show that he is better than another, physical violence will break out.

Two soldiers in leading positions may fight each other secretly without anyone else being present: they go off into the forest and fight it out. A conflict may begin with a sudden, treacherous attack by one man on another. There are also open, legal encounters. Sport is particularly admired by *spetsnaz*. The whole company is brought together, and they fight each other without rules, using all the tricks that *spetsnaz* has taught them -- boxing, sambo, karate. Some fights go on until the first blood is drawn. Others go on until one person is humiliated and admits he is defeated.

Among the various ways of finding leaders a very effective one is the fight with whips. It is an old gypsy way of establishing a relationship. The leather-plaited whip several metres long is a weapon only rarely met with in *spetsnaz*. But if a soldier (usually a Kalmik, a Mongolian or a gypsy) shows that he can handle the weapon with real skill he is allowed to carry a whip with him as a weapon. When two experts with the whip meet up and each claims to be the better one, the argument is resolved in a frightful contest.

When we speak about the customs observed within *spetsnaz* we must of course take into account the simple fact that *spetsnaz* has its own standards and its own understanding of the words 'bad' and 'good'. Let us not be too strict in our judgement of the *spetsnaz* soldiers for their cruel ways, their bloodthirstiness and their lack of humanity. *Spetsnaz* is a closed society of people living permanently at the extreme limits of human existence. They are people who even in peacetime are risking their lives. Their existence bears no relation at all to the way the majority of the inhabitants of our planet live. In *spetsnaz* a man can be admired for qualities of which the average man may have no idea.

The typical *spetsnaz* soldier is a sceptic, a cynic and a pessimist. He believes profoundly in the depravity of human nature and knows (from his own experience) that in extreme conditions a man becomes a beast. There are situations where a man will save the lives of others at the expense of his own life. But in the opinion of the *spetsnaz* men this happens only in a sudden emergency: for example, a man may throw himself in front of a train to push another man aside and save his life. But when an emergency situation, such as a terrible famine, lasts for months or even years, the *spetsnaz* view is that it is every man for himself. If a man helps another in need it means that the need is not extreme. If a man shares his bread with another in time of famine it means the famine is not extreme.

In the *spetsnaz* soldier's opinion the most dangerous thing he can do is put faith in his comrade, who may at the most critical moment turn out to be

a beast. It is much simpler for him not to trust his comrade (or anybody else), so that in a critical situation there will be no shattered illusions. Better that he regards all his fellow human beings as beasts from the outset than to make that discovery in an utterly hopeless situation.

The soldier's credo can be stated in a triple formula: Don't trust, don't beg, don't fear. It is a formula which did not originate in *spetsnaz*, but in prisons many centuries ago. In it can be seen the whole outlook of the *spetsnaz* soldier: his practically superhuman contempt for death, and a similar contempt for everybody around him. He does not believe in justice, goodness or humanity. He does not even believe in force until it has been demonstrated by means of a fist, a whip or the teeth of a dog. When it is demonstrated his natural reflex is to challenge it immediately.

Sometimes in the life of a *spetsnaz* soldier he has a sort of revelation, a sense of complete freedom and happiness. In this mental state he fears nobody at all, trusts no one at all, and would not ask anybody for anything, even for mercy. This state comes about in a combination of circumstances in which a soldier would go voluntarily to his death, completely contemptuous of it. At that moment the soldier's mind triumphs completely over cowardice, the vileness and meanness around him. Once he has experienced this sensation of liberation, the soldier is capable of any act of heroism, even sacrificing his life to save a comrade. But his act has nothing in common with ordinary soldiers' friendship. The motive behind such an act is to show, at the cost of his own life, his superiority over all around him, including the comrade he saves.

In order for such a moment of revelation to come on some occasion, the soldier goes through a long and careful training. All the beatings, all the insults and humiliations that he has suffered, are steps on the path to a brilliant suicidal feat of heroism. The well-fed, self-satisfied, egoistic soldier will never perform any acts of heroism. Only someone who has been driven barefoot into the mud and snow, who has had even his bread taken away from him and has proved every day with his fists his right to existence -- only this kind of man is capable of showing one day that he really is the best.

Chapter 5. The 'Other People'

Although the vast majority of *spetsnaz* is made up of Slavonic personnel, there are some exceptions.

At first glance you would say he is a gypsy. Tall, well-built, athletic in his movements, handsome, with a hooked nose and flashing eyes. The captain plays the guitar so well that passers-by stop and do not go away until he stops playing. He dances as very few know how. His officer's uniform fits him as if it were on a dummy in the window of the main military clothing shop on the Arbat.

The officer has had a typical career. He was born in 1952 in Ivanovo, where he went to school. Then he attended the higher school for airborne troops in Ryazan, and he wears the uniform of the airborne forces. He commands a company in the Siberian military district. All very typical and

familiar. At first glance. But he is Captain Roberto Rueda-Maestro -- not a very usual name for a Soviet officer.

There is a mistake: the captain is not a gypsy. And if we study him more carefully we notice some other peculiarities. He is wearing the uniform of the airborne troops. But there are no airborne troops in the Siberian military district where he is stationed. Even stranger is the fact that after finishing school Roberto spent some time in Spain as a tourist. That was in 1969. Can we imagine a tourist from the Soviet Union being in Spain under Franco's rule, at a time when the Soviet Union maintained no diplomatic relations with Spain? Roberto Rueda-Maestro *was* in Spain at that time and has some idea of the country. But the strangest aspect of this story is that, after spending some time in a capitalist country, the young man was able to enter a Soviet military school. And not any school, but the Ryazan higher school for airborne troops.

These facts are clues. The full set of clues gives us the right answer, without fear of contradiction. The captain is a *spetsnaz* officer.

During the Civil War in Spain thousands of Spanish children were evacuated to the Soviet Union. The exact number of children evacuated is not known. The figures given about this are very contradictory. But there were enough of them for several full-length films to be made and for books and articles to be written about them in the Soviet Union.

As young men they soon became cadets at Soviet military schools. A well-known example is Ruben Ruis Ibarruri, son of Dolores Ibarruri, general secretary of the Communist Party of Spain. Even at this time the Spaniards were put into the airborne troops. Ruben Ibarruri, for example, found himself in the 8th airborne corps. It is true that in a war of defence those formations intended for aggressive advancing operations were found to be unnecessary, and they were reorganised into guard rifle divisions and used in defensive battles at Stalingrad. Lieutenant Ibarruri was killed while serving in the 35th guard rifle division which had been formed out of the 8th airborne corps. It was a typical fate for young men at that time. But then they were evacuated to the Urals and Siberia, where the Spanish Communist Party (under Stalin's control) organised special schools for them. From then on references to Spanish children appeared very rarely in the Soviet press.

One of the special schools was situated in the town of Ivanovo and was known as the E. D. Stasova International School. Some graduates of this school later turned up in Fidel Castro's personal bodyguard, some became leading figures in the Cuban intelligence service -- the most aggressive in the world, exceeding its teachers in the GRU and KGB in both cruelty and cunning. Some of the school's graduates were used as 'illegals' by the GRU and KGB.

It has to be said, however, that the majority of the first generation of Spanish children remained in the Soviet Union with no possibility of leaving it. But then in the 1950s and 1960s a new generation of Soviet Spaniards was born, differing from the first generation in that it had no

parents in the USSR. This is very important if a young man is being sent abroad on a risky mission, for the Communists then have the man's parents as hostages.

The second generation of Spaniards is used by the Soviet Government in many ways for operations abroad. One very effective device is to send some young Soviet Spaniards to Cuba, give them time to get used to the country and acclimatise themselves, and then send them to Africa and Central America as Cubans to fight against 'American Imperialism'. The majority of Cuban troops serving abroad are certainly Cubans. But among them is a certain percentage of men who were born in the Soviet Union and who have Russian wives and children and a military rank in the armed forces of the USSR.

For some reason Captain Roberto Rueda-Maestro is serving in the Urals military district. I must emphasise that we are still talking about the usual *spetsnaz* units, and we haven't started to discuss 'agents'. An agent is a citizen of a foreign country recruited into the Soviet intelligence service. Roberto is a citizen of the Soviet Union. He does not have and has never had in his life any other citizenship. He has a Russian wife and children born on the territory of the USSR, as he was himself. That is why the captain is serving in a normal *spetsnaz* unit, as an ordinary Soviet officer.

Spetsnaz seeks out and finds -- it is easy to do in the Soviet Union -- people born in the Soviet Union but of obviously foreign origin. With a name like Rueda-Maestro it is very difficult to make a career in any branch of the Soviet armed forces. The only exception is *spetsnaz*, where such a name is no obstacle but a passport to promotion.

In *spetsnaz* I have met people with German names such as Stolz, Schwarz, Weiss and so forth. The story of these Soviet Germans is also connected with the war. According to 1979 figures there were 1,846,000 Germans living in the Soviet Union. But most of those Germans came to Russia two hundred years ago and are of no use to *spetsnaz*. Different Germans are required, and they also exist in the Soviet Union.

During the war, and especially in its final stages, the Red Army took a tremendous number of German soldiers prisoner. The prisoners were held in utterly inhuman conditions, and it was not surprising that some of them did things that they would not have done in any other situation. They were people driven to extremes by the brutal Gulag regime, who committed crimes against their fellow prisoners, sometimes even murdering their comrades, or forcing them to suicide. Many of those who survived, once released from the prison camp, were afraid to return to Germany and settled in the Soviet Union. Though the percentage of such people was small it still meant quite a lot of people, all of whom were of course on the records of the Soviet secret services and were used by them. The Soviet special services helped many of them to settle down and have a family. There were plenty of German women from among the Germans long settled in Russia. So now the Soviet Union has a second generation of Soviet Germans, born in the Soviet Union of fathers who have committed crimes against the German people. This is the kind of young German who can be met with in many *spetsnaz* units.

Very rarely one comes across young Soviet Italians, too, with the same background as the Spaniards and Germans. And *spetsnaz* contains Turks, Kurds, Greeks, Koreans, Mongolians, Finns and people of other nationalities. How they came to be there I do not know. But it can be taken for granted that every one of them has a much-loved family in the Soviet Union. *Spetsnaz* trusts its soldiers, but still prefers to have hostages for each of its men.

The result is that the percentage of *spetsnaz* soldiers who were born in the Soviet Union to parents of genuine foreign extraction is quite high. With the mixture of Soviet nationalities, mainly Russian, Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Georgians and Uzbeks, the units are a very motley company indeed. You may even, suddenly, come across a real Chinese. Such people, citizens of the USSR but of foreign extraction, are known as 'the other people'. I don't know where the name came from, but the foreigners accept it and are not offended. In my view it is used without any tinge of racism, in a spirit rather of friendship and good humour, to differentiate people who are on the one hand Soviet people born in the Soviet Union of Soviet parents, and who on the other hand differ sharply from the main body of *spetsnaz* soldiers in their appearance, speech, habits and manners.

I have never heard of there being purely national formations within *spetsnaz* -- a German platoon or a Spanish company. It is perfectly possible that they would be created in case of necessity, and perhaps there are some permanent *spetsnaz* groups chosen on a purely national basis. But I cannot confirm this.

Chapter 6. Athletes

In the Soviet Union sport has been nationalised. That means to say that it does not serve the interests of individuals but of society as a whole. The interests of the individual and the interests of society are sometimes very different. The state defends the interests of society against individuals, not just in sport but in all other spheres.

Some individuals want to be strong, handsome and attractive. That is why 'body-building' is so popular in the West. It is an occupation for individuals. In the Soviet Union it scarcely exists, because such an occupation brings no benefit to the state. Why should the state spend the nation's resources so that someone can be strong and beautiful? Consequently the state does not spend a single *kopek* on such things, does not organise athletic competitions, does not reward the victors with prizes and does not advertise achievements in that field. There are some individuals who engage in body-building, but they have no resources and no rights to organise their own societies and associations.

The same applies to billiards, golf and some other forms of which the only purpose is relaxation and amusement. What benefits would it bring the state if it spent money on such forms of sport? For the same reason the Soviet Union has done nothing about sport for invalids. Why should it? To make the invalids happy?

But that same state devotes colossal resources to sport which does

bring benefit to the state. In the Soviet Union any sport is encouraged which: demonstrates the superiority of the Soviet system over any other system; provides the ordinary people with something to take their minds off their everyday worries; helps to strengthen the state, military and police apparatus.

The Soviet Union is ready to encourage any sport in which achievement is measured in minutes, seconds, metres, kilometres, centimetres, kilograms or grams. If an athlete shows some promise that he may run a distance a tenth of a second quicker than an American or may jump half a centimetre higher than his rival across the ocean, the state will create for such an athlete whatever conditions he needs: it will build him a personal training centre, get together a personal group of trainers, doctors, managers or scientific consultants. The state is rich enough to spend money on self-advertisement. These 'amateur' sportsmen earn large sums of money, though exactly how much is a secret. The question has irritated some Soviets because it would not be a secret if the amount were small. Even the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, on 6 August, 1986, raised the question with some indignation.

The Soviet Union encourages any striking spectator sport which can attract millions of people, make them drop what they are doing and admire the Soviet gymnasts, figure-skaters or acrobats. It also encourages all team games. Basketball, volleyball, water polo are all popular. The most aggressive of the team games, ice-hockey, is perhaps more of a national religion than is Communist ideology. Finally, it encourages any sport directly connected with the development of military skills: shooting, flying, gliding, parachute jumping, boxing, sambo, karate, the biathlon, the military triathlon, and so forth.

The most successful, richest and largest society in the Soviet Union concerned with sport is the Central Army Sports Club (ZSKA). Members of the club have included 850 European champions, 625 world champions and 182 Olympic champions. They have set up 341 European and 430 world records.¹

¹ All figures as of 1 January, 1979.

Such results do not indicate that the Soviet Army is the best at training top-class athletes. This was admitted even by *Pravda*.² The secret of success lies in the enormous resources of the Soviet Army. *Pravda* describes what happens: 'It is sufficient for some even slightly promising boxer to come on the scene and he is immediately lured across to the ZSKA.' As a result, out of the twelve best boxers in the Soviet Union ten are from the Army Club, one from *Dinamo* (the sports organisation run by the KGB), and one from the *Trud* sports club. But of those ten army boxers, not one was the original product of the Army club. They had all been lured away from other clubs -- the *Trudoviye rezervy*, the *Spartak* or the *Burevestnik*. The same thing happens in ice-hockey, parachute jumping, swimming and many other sports.

² 2 September, 1985.

How does the army club manage to attract athletes to it? Firstly by giving them military rank. Any athlete who joins the ZSKA is given the rank of sergeant, sergeant-major, warrant officer or officer, depending on what

level he is at. The better his results as an athlete the higher the rank. Once he has a military rank an athlete is able to devote as much time to sport as he wishes and at the same time be regarded as an amateur, because professionally he is a soldier. Any Soviet 'amateur' athlete who performs slightly better than the average receives extra pay in various forms -- 'for additional nourishment', 'for sports clothing', 'for travelling', and so forth. The 'amateur' receives for indulging in his sport much more than a doctor or a skilled engineer, so long as he achieves European standards. But the Soviet Army also pays him, and not badly, for his military rank and service.

The ZSKA is very attractive for an athlete in that, when he can no longer engage in his sport at international level, he can still retain his military rank and pay. In most other clubs he would be finished altogether. What has this policy produced? At the 14th winter Olympic Games, Soviet military athletes won seventeen gold medals. If one counts also the number of silver and bronze winners, the number of athletes with military rank is greatly increased. And if one were to draw up a similar list of military athletes at the summer Games it would take up many pages. Is there a single army in the world that comes near the Soviet Army in this achievement?

Now for another question: why is the Soviet Army so ready to hand out military ranks to athletes, to pay them a salary and provide them with the accommodation and privileges of army officers?

The answer is that the ZSKA and its numerous branches provide a base that *spetsnaz* uses for recruiting its best fighters. Naturally not every member of the ZSKA is a *spetsnaz* soldier. But the best athletes in ZSKA almost always are.

Spetsnaz is a mixture of sport, politics, espionage and armed terrorism. It is difficult to determine what takes precedence and what is subordinate to what, everything is so closely linked together.

In the first place the Soviet Union seeks international prestige in the form of gold medals at the Olympics. To achieve that it needs an organisation with the strictest discipline and rules, capable of squeezing every ounce of strength out of the athletes without ever letting them slack off.

In the second place the Soviet Army needs an enormous number of people with exceptional athletic ability at Olympic level to carry out special missions behind the enemy's lines. It is desirable that these people should be able to visit foreign countries in peace time. Sport makes that possible. As far as the athletes are concerned, they are grateful for a very rich club which can pay them well, provide them with cars and apartments, and arrange trips abroad for them. Moreover, they need the sort of club in which they can be regarded as amateurs, though they will work nowhere else but in the club.

Spetsnaz is the point where the interests of the state, the Soviet Army and military intelligence coincide with the interests of some individuals who want to devote their whole lives to sport.

After the Second World War, as a result of the experience gained, sports battalions were created by the headquarters of every military district, group of forces and fleet; at army and flotilla HQ level sports companies were formed. These huge sports formations were directly under the control of the Ministry of Defence. They provided the means of bringing together the best athletes whose job was to defend the sporting honour of the particular army, flotilla, district, group or fleet in which they served. Some of the athletes were people called up for their military service, who left the Army once they had completed their service. But the majority remained in the military sports organisation for a long time with the rank of sergeant and higher. Soviet military intelligence chose its best men from the members of the sports units.

At the end of the 1960s it was recognised that a sports company or a sports battalion was too much of a contradiction in terms. It could arouse unnecessary attention from outsiders. So the sports units were disbanded and in their place came the sports teams. The change was purely cosmetic. The sports teams of the military districts, groups, fleets and so forth exist as independent units. The soldiers, sergeants, *praporshiki* and officers who belong to them are not serving in army regiments, brigades or divisions. Their service is in the sports team under the control of the district's headquarters. The majority of these sportsmen are carefully screened and recruited for *spetsnaz* training to carry out the most risky missions behind the enemy's lines. Usually they are all obliged to take part in parachute jumping, sambo, rifle-shooting, running and swimming, apart from their own basic sport.

A person looking at the teams of the military districts, groups and so forth with an untrained eye will notice nothing unusual. It is as though *spetsnaz* is a completely separate entity. Every athlete and every small group have their own individual tasks and get on with them: running, swimming, jumping and shooting. But later, in the evenings, in closed, well-guarded premises, they study topography, radio communications, engineering and other special subjects. They are regularly taken off secretly in ones and twos or groups, or even regiments to remote parts where they take part in exercises. Companies and regiments of professional athletes in *spetsnaz* exist only temporarily during the exercises and alerts, and they then quietly disperse, becoming again innocent sections and teams able at the right moment to turn into formidable fighting units.

According to Colonel-General Shatilov, the athlete is more energetic and braver in battle, has more confidence in his strength, is difficult to catch unawares, reacts quickly to changes of circumstance and is less liable to tire. There is no disputing this. A first-class athlete is primarily a person who possesses great strength of will, who has defeated his own laziness and cowardice, who has forced himself to run every day till he drops and has trained his muscles to a state of complete exhaustion. An athlete is a man infected by the spirit of competition and who desires victory in a competition or battle more than the average man.

In the sports sections and teams of the military districts, groups, armies, fleets, flotillas there is a very high percentage of women also engaged in sport and who defend the honour of their district, group and so

forth. Like the men, the women are given military rank and, like the men, are recruited into *spetsnaz*.

There are no women in the usual *spetsnaz* units. But in the professional sports units of *spetsnaz* women constitute about half the numbers. They engage in various kinds of sport: parachute jumping, gliding, flying, shooting, running, swimming, motocross, and so on. Every woman who joins *spetsnaz* has to engage in some associated forms of sport apart from her own basic sport, and among these are some that are obligatory, such as sambo, shooting and a few others. The woman have to take part in exercises along with the men and have to study the full syllabus of subjects necessary for operating behind the enemy's lines.

That there should be such a high percentage of women in the professional sports formations of *spetsnaz* is a matter of psychology and strategy: if in the course of a war a group of tall, broadshouldered young men were to appear behind the lines this might give rise to bewilderment, since all the men are supposed to be at the front. But if in the same situation people were to see a group of athletic-looking girls there would be little likelihood of any alarm or surprise.

To be successful in war you have to have a very good knowledge of the natural conditions in the area in which you are to be operating: the terrain and the climate. You must have a good idea of the habits of the local population, the language and the possibilities of concealment; the forests, undergrowth, mountains, caves, and the obstacles to be overcome; the rivers, ravines and gullies. You must know the whereabouts of the enemy's military units and police, the tactics they employ and so forth.

A private in the average *spetsnaz* unit cannot, of course, visit the places where he is likely to have to fight in the event of war. But a top-class professional athlete does have the opportunity. The Soviet Army takes advantage of such opportunities.

For example, in 1984 the 12th world parachuting championship took place in France. There were altogether twenty-six gold medals to be competed for, and the Soviet team won twenty-two of them. The 'Soviet team' was in fact a team belonging to the armed forces of the USSR. It consisted of five men and five women: a captain, a senior *praporshik*, three *praporshiki*, a senior sergeant and four sergeants. The team's trainer, its doctor and the whole of the technical personnel were Soviet officers. The Soviet reporter accompanying the team was a colonel. This group of 'sportsmen' spent time in Paris and in the south of France. A very interesting and very useful trip, and there were other Soviet officers besides -- for example a colonel who was the trainer of the Cuban team.

Now let us suppose a war has broken out. The Soviet Army must neutralise the French nuclear capability. France is the only country in Europe, apart from the Soviet Union itself, that stores strategic nuclear missiles in underground silos. The silos are an extremely important target, possibly the most important in Europe. The force that will put them out of action will be a *spetsnaz* force. And who will the Soviet high command send to carry out the mission? The answer is that, after the world parachuting championship, they have a tailor-made team.

It is often claimed that sport improves relations between countries.

This is a strange argument. If it is the case, why did it not occur to anyone before the Second World War to invite German SS parachutists to their country to improve relations with the Nazis?

At the present time every country has good grounds for not receiving any Soviet military athletes on its own territory. The USSR should not be judged on its record. To take three cases: the Soviet Government sent troops into Czechoslovakia *temporarily*. We of course trust the statements made by the Soviet Government and know that after a certain time the Soviet troops will be withdrawn from Czechoslovakia. But until that happens there are sufficient grounds for 'temporarily' not allowing the Soviet Army into any free country.

Secondly, the Soviet Union introduced a 'limited' contingent of its troops into Afghanistan. The Soviet leaders' idea was that the word 'limited' would serve to reassure everyone -- there would be grounds for concern if there were an 'unlimited' contingent of Soviet troops in Afghanistan. But so long as the 'limited' contingent of Soviet troops is still in Afghanistan it would not be a bad idea to limit the number of Soviet colonels, majors, captains and sergeants in the countries of the West, especially those wearing blue berets and little gilt parachute badges on their lapels. It is those people in the blue berets who are killing children, women and old men in Afghanistan in the most brutal and ruthless way.

Thirdly, a Soviet pilot shot down a passenger plane with hundreds of people in it. After that, is there any sense in meeting Soviet airmen at international competitions and finding out who is better and who is worse? Surely the answer is clear, without any competition.

Sport is politics, and big-time sport is big-time politics. At the end of the last war the Soviet Union seized the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and the West has never recognised the Soviet Union's right to those territories. All right, said the Soviet leaders, if you won't recognise it *de jure*, recognise it *de facto*. A great deal has been done, some of it with the help of sport. During the Moscow Olympic Games some of the competitions took place in Moscow and some of them in the occupied territories of the Baltic states. At that time I talked to a number of Western politicians and sportsmen. I asked them: if the Soviet Union had occupied Sweden, would they have gone to the Olympic Games in Moscow? With one indignant voice they replied, 'No!' But if parts of the Games had taken place in Moscow and part in Stockholm would they have gone to occupied Stockholm? Here there was no limit to their indignation. They considered themselves people of character and they would never have gone to occupied countries. Then why, I asked, did they go to an Olympic Games, part of which took place in the occupied territory of the Baltic states? To that question I received no answer.

The units made up of professional athletes in *spetsnaz* are an elite within an elite. They are made up of far better human material (some of Olympic standard), enjoy incomparably better living conditions and many more privileges than other *spetsnaz* units.

In carrying out their missions the professional athletes have the right to make contact with *spetsnaz* agents on enemy territory and obtain help from

them. They are in effect the advance guard for all the other *spetsnaz* formations. They are the first to be issued with latest weapons and equipment and the first to try out the newly devised and most risky kinds of operation. It is only after experiments have been carried out by the units of athletes that new weapons, equipment and ways of operating are adopted by regular *spetsnaz* units. Here is an example:

In my book *Aquarium*, first published in July 1985, I described the period of my life when I served as an officer of the Intelligence directorate of a military district and often had to act as the personal representative of the district's chief of intelligence with the *spetsnaz* groups. The period I described was identified: it was after my return from 'liberated' Czechoslovakia and before I entered the Military-Diplomatic Academy in the summer of 1970.

I described the ordinary *spetsnaz* units that I had to deal with. One group carried out a parachute jump from 100 metres. Each man had just one parachute: in that situation a spare one was pointless. The jump took place over snow. Throughout the book I refer only to one type of parachute: the D-1-8. Four months later, in the magazine *Sovetsky Voin* for November 1985, a Lieutenant-General Lisov published what might be called the pre-history of group parachute jumps by *spetsnaz* units from critically low levels. The General describes a group jump from a height of 100 metres in which each man had only one parachute, and he explains that a spare one is not needed. The jump takes place over snow. The article refers to only one type of parachute -- the D-1-8.

General Lisov was describing trials which were carried out from October 1967 to March 1968. The General did not, of course, say why the trials were carried out and the word *spetsnaz* was not, of course, used. But he underlined the fact that the trial was not conducted because it had any connection with sport. On the contrary, according to the rules laid down by the international sports bodies at that time, anyone who during a contest opened his parachute less than 400 metres from the ground was disqualified.

General Lisov conducted the trial contrary to all rules of the sport and not to demonstrate sporting prowess. The military athletes left the aircraft at a height of 100 metres, so their parachutes must have opened even lower down. The group jump took place simultaneously from several aircraft, with the parachutists leaving their plane at about one-second intervals. Each of them was in the air for between 9.5 and 13 seconds. General Lisov summed it up like this: 100 metres, 50 men, 23 seconds. An amazing result by any standards.

The fifty men symbolised the fifty years of the Soviet Army. It was planned to carry out the jump of 23 February, 1968, on the Army's anniversary, but because of the weather it was postponed till 1 March.

I could not have known at that time about General Lisov's trials. But it is now clear to me that the tactic that was being developed in the *spetsnaz* fighting units in 1969-70 had been initiated by professional military athletes a year before.

This dangerous stunt was carried out in my ordinary *spetsnaz* unit in rather simpler conditions: we jumped in a group of thirteen men from the wide rear door of an Antonov-12 aircraft. The professionals described by General Lisov jumped from the narrow side doors of an Antonov-2, which is more awkward and dangerous. The professionals made the jump in a much bigger group, more closely together and with greater accuracy.

In spite of the fact that the ordinary *spetsnaz* units did not succeed and will never succeed in achieving results comparable with those of the professional athletes, nevertheless the idea of the group jump from a height of a hundred metres provided the fighting units with an exceptionally valuable technique. The special troops are on the ground before the planes have vanished over the horizon, and they are ready for action before the enemy has had time to grasp what is happening. They need this technique to be able to attack the enemy without any warning at all. That is the reason for taking such a risk.

During a war the fighting units of *spetsnaz* will be carrying out missions behind the enemy's lines. Surely the units of professional athletes, which are capable of carrying out extremely dangerous work with even greater precision and speed than the ordinary *spetsnaz* units, should not be left unemployed in wartime?

Before leaving the subject entirely, I would like to add a few words about another use of Soviet athletes for terrorist operations. Not only the Soviet Army but also the Soviet state's punitive apparatus (known at various times as the NKVD, the MGB, the MVD and the KGB) has its own sports organisation, *Dinamo*. Here are some illustrations of its practical application.

'When the war broke out the "pure" parachutists disappeared, Anna Shishmareva joined the OMSBON.'³ Anna Shishmareva is a famous Soviet woman athlete of the pre-war period, while OMSBON was a brigade of the NKVD's *osnaz* which I have already referred to. Another example: 'Among the people in our *osoby*, as our unit was called, were many athletes, record holders and Soviet champions famous before the war.'⁴ Finally: Boris Galushkin, the outstanding Soviet boxer of the pre-war period, was a lieutenant and worked as an interrogator in the NKVD. During the war he went behind the enemy lines in one of the *osnaz* units.

I have quite a few examples in my collection. But the KGB and the *Dinamo* sports club are not my field of interest. I hope that one of the former officers of the KGB who has fled to the West will write in greater detail about the use of athletes in the Soviet secret police.

However, I must also make mention of the very mysterious Soviet sporting society known as *Zenit*. Officially it belongs to the ministry for the aircraft industry. But there are some quite weighty reasons for believing that there is somebody else behind the club. The *Zenit* cannot be compared with the ZSKA or *Dinamo* in its sporting results or its popularity. But it occasionally displays a quite unusual aggressiveness in its efforts to acquire the best athletes. The style and the general direction of the training in the *Zenit* are very militarised and very similar to what goes on in the ZSKA and *Dinamo*. *Zenit* deserves greater attention than it has been shown. It is just possible that the researcher who studied *Zenit* and its connections seriously will make some surprising discoveries.

³ *Sovetsky Voin*, No. 20, 1985.

⁴ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 22 May, 1985.

Chapter 7. Selection and Training

Between soldiers and their officers are the sergeants, an intermediate rank with its own internal seniority of junior sergeants, full sergeants, senior sergeant and *starshina*. The training of the sergeants is of critical importance in *spetsnaz* where discipline and competence are required to an even more stringent degree than in the everyday life of the armed forces.

In normal circumstances training is carried out by special training divisions. Each of these has a permanent staff, a general, officers, warrant officers and sergeants and a limited number of soldiers in support units. Every six months the division receives 10,000 recruits who are distributed among the regiments and battalions on a temporary basis. After five months of harsh training these young soldiers receive their sergeants' stripes and are sent out to regular divisions. It takes a month to distribute the young sergeants to the regular forces, to prepare the training base for the new input and to receive a fresh contingent. After that the training programme is repeated. Thus each training division is a gigantic incubator producing 20,000 sergeants a year. A training division is organised in the usual way: three motorised rifle regiments, a tank regiment, an artillery regiment, an anti-aircraft regiment, a missile battalion and so forth. Each regiment and battalion trains specialists in its own field, from infantry sergeants to land surveyors, topographers and signallers.

A training division is a means of mass-producing sergeants for a gigantic army which in peacetime has in its ranks around five million men but which in case of war increases considerably in size. There is one shortcoming in this mass production. The selection of sergeants is not carried out by the commanders of the regular divisions but by local military agencies -- the military commissariats and the mobilisation officers of the military districts. This selection cannot be, and is not, qualitative. When they receive instructions from their superiors the local authorities simply despatch several truckloads or trainloads of recruits.

Having received its 10,000 recruits, who are no different from any others, the training division has in five months to turn them into commanders and specialists. A certain number of the new recruits are sent straight off to the regular divisions on the grounds that they are not at all suitable for being turned into commanders. But the training division has very strict standards and cannot normally send more than five percent of its intake to regular divisions. Then, in exchange for those who were sent straight off, others arrive, but they are not much better in quality than those sent away, so the officers and sergeants of the training division have to exert all their ability, all their fury and inventiveness, to turn these people into sergeants.

The selection of future sergeants for *spetsnaz* takes place in a different way which is much more complicated and much more expensive. All the recruits to *spetsnaz* (after a very careful selection) join fighting units, where the company commander and platoon commanders put their young soldiers through a very tough course. This initial period of training for new recruits takes place away from other soldiers. During the course the company commander and the platoon commanders very carefully select (because

they are vitally interested in the matter) those who appear to be born leaders. There are a lot of very simple devices for doing this. For example, a group of recruits is given the job of putting up a tent in a double quick time, but no leader is appointed among them. In a relatively simple operation someone has to co-ordinate the actions of the rest. A very short time is allowed for the work to be carried out and severe punishment is promised if the work is badly done or not completed on time. Within five minutes the group has appointed its own leader. Again, a group may be given the task of getting from one place to another by a very complicated and confused route without losing a single man. And again the group will soon appoint its own leader. Every day, every hour and every minute of the soldier's time is taken up with hard work, lessons, running, jumping, overcoming obstacles, and practically all the time the group is without a commander. In a few days of very intensive training the company commander and platoon commanders pick out the most intelligent, most imaginative, strongest, most brash and energetic in the group. After completing the course the majority of recruits finish up in sections and platoons of the same company, but the best of them are sent thousands of kilometres away to one of the *spetsnaz* training battalions where they become sergeants. Then they return to the companies they came from.

It is a very long road for the recruit. But it has one advantage: the potential sergeant is not selected by the local military authority nor even by the training unit, but by a regular officer at a very low level -- at platoon or company level. What is more, the selection is made on a strictly individual basis and by the very same officer who will in five months' time receive the man he has selected back again, now equipped with sergeant's stripes.

It is impossible, of course, to introduce such a system into the whole of the Soviet Armed Forces. It involves transporting millions of men from one place to another. In all other branches the path of the future sergeant from where he lives follows this plan: training division -- regular division. In *spetsnaz* the plan is: regular unit -- training unit -- regular unit.

There is yet another difference of principle. If any other branch of the services needs a sergeant the military commissariat despatches a recruit to the training division, which has to make him into a sergeant. But if *spetsnaz* needs a sergeant the company commander sends three of his best recruits to the *spetsnaz* training unit.

The *spetsnaz* training battalion works on the principle that before you start giving orders, you have to learn to obey them. The whole of the thinking behind the training battalions can be put very simply. They say that if you make an empty barrel airtight and drag it down below the water and then let it go it shoots up and out above the surface of the water. The deeper it is dragged down the faster it rises and the further it jumps out of the water. This is how the training battalions operate. Their task is to drag their ever-changing body of men deeper down.

Each *spetsnaz* training battalion has its permanent staff of officers, warrant officers and sergeants and receives its intake of 300-400 *spetsnaz* recruits who have already been through a recruit's course in various

spetsnaz units.

The regime in the normal Soviet training divisions can only be described as brutal. I experienced it first as a student in a training division. I have already described the conditions within *spetsnaz*. To appreciate what conditions are like in a *spetsnaz* training battalion, the brutality has to be multiplied many times over.

In the *spetsnaz* training battalions the empty barrel is dragged so far down into the deep that it is in danger of bursting from external pressure. A man's dignity is stripped from him to such an extent that it is kept constantly at the very brink, beyond which lies suicide or the murder of his officer. The officers and sergeants of the training battalions are, every one of them, enthusiasts for their work. Anyone who does like this work will not stand it for so long but goes off voluntarily to other easier work in *spetsnaz* regular units. The only people who stay in the training battalions are those who derive great pleasure from their work. Their work is to issue orders by which they make or break the strongest of characters. The commander's work is constantly to see before him dozens of men, each of whom has one thought in his head: to kill himself or to kill his officer? The work for those who enjoy it provides complete moral and physical satisfaction, just as a stuntman might derive satisfaction from leaping on a motorcycle over nineteen coaches. The difference between the stuntman risking his neck and the commander of a *spetsnaz* training unit lies in the fact that the former experiences his satisfaction for a matter of a few seconds, while the latter experiences it all the time.

Every soldier taken into a training battalion is given a nickname, almost invariably sarcastic. He might be known as The Count, The Duke, Caesar, Alexander of Macedon, Louis XI, Ambassador, Minister of Foreign Affairs, or any variation on the theme. He is treated with exaggerated respect, not given orders, but asked for his opinion:

'Would Your Excellency be of a mind to clean the toilet with his toothbrush?'

'Illustrious Prince, would you care to throw up in public what you ate at lunch?'

In *spetsnaz* units men are fed much better than in any other units of the armed forces, but the workload is so great that the men are permanently hungry, even if they do not suffer the unofficial but very common punishment of being forced to empty their stomachs:

'You're on the heavy side, Count, after your lunch! Would you care to stick two fingers down your throat? That'll make things easier!'

The more humiliating the forms of punishment a sergeant thinks up for the men under him, and the more violently he attacks their dignity, the better. The task of the training battalions is to crush and completely destroy the individual, however strong a character he may have possessed, and to fashion out of that person a type to fit the standards of *spetsnaz*, a type who will be filled with an explosive charge of hatred and spite and a craving for revenge.

The main difficulty in carrying out this act of human engineering is to turn the fury of the young soldier in the right direction. He has to have been reduced to the lowest limits of his dignity and then, at precisely the

point when he can take no more, he can be given his sergeant's stripes and sent off to serve in a regular unit. There he can begin to work off his fury on his own subordinates, or better still on the enemies of Communism.

The training units of *spetsnaz* are a place where they tease a recruit like a dog, working him into a rage and then letting him off the leash. It is not surprising that fights inside *spetsnaz* are a common occurrence. Everyone, especially those who have served in a *spetsnaz* training unit, bears within himself a colossal charge of malice, just as a thunder cloud bears its charge of electricity. It is not surprising that for a *spetsnaz* private, or even more so for a sergeant, war is just a beautiful dream, the time when he is at last allowed to release his full charge of malice.

Apart from the unending succession of humiliations, insults and punishments handed out by the commanders, the man serving in a *spetsnaz* training unit has continually to wage a no less bitter battle against his own comrades who are in identical circumstances to his own.

In the first place there is a silent competition for pride of place, for the leadership in each group of people. In *spetsnaz*, as we have seen, this struggle has assumed open and very dramatic forms. Apart from this natural battle for first place there exists an even more serious incentive. It derives from the fact that for every sergeant's place in a *spetsnaz* training battalion there are three candidates being trained at the same time. Only the very best will be made sergeant at the end of five months. On passing out some are given the rank of junior sergeant, while others are not given any rank at all and remain as privates in the ranks. It is a bitter tragedy for a man to go through all the ordeals of a *spetsnaz* training battalion and not to receive any rank but to return to his unit as a private at the end of it.

The decision whether to promote a man to sergeant after he has been through the training course is made by a commission of GRU officers or the Intelligence Directorate of the military district in whose territory the particular battalion is stationed. The decision is made on the basis of the result of examinations conducted in the presence of the commission, on the main subjects studied: political training; the tactics of *spetsnaz* (including knowledge of the probable enemy and the main targets that *spetsnaz* operates); weapons training (knowledge of *spetsnaz* armament, firing from various kinds of weapons including foreign weapons, and the use of explosives); parachute training; physical training; and weapons of mass destruction and defence against them.

The commission does not distinguish between the soldiers according to where they have come from, but only according to their degree of readiness to carry out missions. Consequently, when the men who have passed out are returned to their units there may arise a lack of balance among them. For example, a *spetsnaz* company that sends nine privates to a training battalion in the hope of receiving three sergeants back after five months, could receive one sergeant, one junior sergeant and seven privates, or five sergeants, three junior sergeants and one private. This system has been introduced quite deliberately. The officer commanding a regular company, with nine trained men to choose from, puts only the very best in charge of his sections. He can put anybody he pleases into the vacancies without

reference to his rank. Privates who have been through the training battalion can be appointed commanders of sections. Sergeants and junior sergeants for whom there are not enough posts as commanders will carry out the work of privates despite their sergeant's rank.

The *spetsnaz* company commander may also have, apart from the freshly trained men, sergeants and privates who completed their training earlier but were not appointed to positions as commanders. Consequently the company commander can entrust the work of commanding sections to any of them, while all the new arrivals from the training battalion can be used as privates.

The private or junior sergeant who is appointed to command a section has to struggle to show his superiors that he really is worthy of that trust and that he really is the best. If he succeeds in doing so he will in due course be given the appropriate rank. If he is unworthy he will be removed. There are always candidates for his job.

This system has two objectives: the first is to have within the *spetsnaz* regular units a large reserve of commanders at the very lowest level. During a war *spetsnaz* will suffer tremendous losses. In every section there are always a minimum of two fully trained men capable of taking command at any moment; the second is to generate a continual battle between sergeants for the right to be a commander. Every commander of a section or deputy commander of a platoon can be removed at any time and replaced by someone more worthy of the job. The removal of a sergeant from a position of command is carried out on the authority of the company commander (if it is a separate *spetsnaz* company) or on the authority of the battalion commander or regiment. When he is removed the former commander is reduced to the status of a private soldier. He *may* retain his rank, or his rank may be reduced, or he may lose the rank of sergeant altogether.

The training of officers for *spetsnaz* often take place at a special faculty of the Lenin Komsomol Higher Airborne Command School in Ryazan. Great care is taken over their selection for the school. The ones who join the faculty are among the very best. The four years of gruelling training are also four years of continual testing and selection to establish whether the students are capable of becoming *spetsnaz* officers or not. When they have completed their studies at the special faculty some of them are posted to the airborne troops or the air assault troops. Only the very best are posted to *spetsnaz*, and even then a young officer can at any moment be sent off into the airborne forces. Only those who are absolutely suitable remain in *spetsnaz*. Other officers are appointed from among the men passing out from other command schools who have never previously heard of *spetsnaz*.

The heads of the GRU consider that special training is necessary for every function, except that of leader. A leader cannot be produced by even the best training scheme. A leader is born a leader and nobody can help him or advise him how to manage people. In this case advice offered by professors does not help; it only hinders. A professor is a man who has never been a leader and never will be, and nobody ever taught Hitler how to lead a nation. Stalin was thrown out of his theological seminary. Marshal Georgi Zhukov, the outstanding military leader of the Second World War, had a million men, and often several million, under his direct command practically throughout the war. Of all the generals and marshals at his

level he was the only one who did not suffer a single defeat in battle. Yet he had no real military education. He did not graduate from a military school to become a junior officer; he did not graduate from a military academy to become a senior officer; and he did not graduate from the Academy of General Staff to become a general and later a marshal. But he became one just the same. There was Khalkhin-Gol, Yelnya, the counter-offensive before Moscow, Stalingrad, the lifting of the Leningrad blockade, Kursk, the crossing of the Dnieper, the Belorussian operation, and the Vistula-Oder and Berlin operations. What need had he of education? What could the professors teach him?

The headquarters of every military district has a Directorate for Personnel, which does a tremendous amount of work on officers' records and on the studying, selecting and posting of officers. On instructions from the chief of staff of the military district the Directorate for Personnel of each district will do a search for officers who come up to the *spetsnaz* standard.

The criteria which the Intelligence directorate sends to the Directorate of Personnel are top secret. But one can easily tell by looking at the officers of *spetsnaz* the qualities which they certainly possess.

The first and most important of them are of course a strong, unbending character and the marks of a born leader. Every year thousands of young officers with all kinds of specialities -- from the missile forces, the tank troops, the infantry, the engineers and signallers pass through the Personnel directorate of each military district. Each officer is preceded by his dossier in which a great deal is written down. But that is not the decisive factor. When he arrives in the Directorate for Personnel the young officer is interviewed by several experienced officers specialising in personnel matters. It is in the course of these interviews that a man of really remarkable personality stands out, with dazzling clarity, from the mass of thousands of other strong-willed and physically powerful men. When the personnel officers discover him, the interviewing is taken over by other officers of the Intelligence directorate and it is they who will very probably offer him a suitable job.

But officers for *spetsnaz* are occasionally not selected when they pass through the Personnel directorate. They pass through the interviewing process without distinguishing themselves in any way, and are given jobs as commanders. Then stories may begin to circulate through the regiment, division, army and district to the effect that such and such a young commander is a brute, ready to attack anyone, but holds his own, performs miracles, has turned a backward platoon into a model unit, and so forth. The man is rapidly promoted and can be sure of being appointed to a penal battalion -- not to be punished, but to take charge of the offenders. At this point the Intelligence directorate takes a hand in the matter. If the officer is in command of a penal platoon or company and he is tough enough to handle really difficult men without being scared of them or fearing to use his own strength, he will be weighed up very carefully for a job.

There is one other way in which officers are chosen. Every officer with his unit has to mount guard for the garrison and patrol the streets and railway stations in search of offenders. The military commandant of the town

and the officer commanding the garrison (the senior military man in town) see these officers every day. Day after day they take over the duty from another officer, perform it for twenty-four hours and then hand over to another officer. The system has existed for decades and all serving officers carry out these duties several times a year. It is the right moment to study their characters.

Say a drunken private is hauled into the guardroom. One officer will say, 'Pour ice-cold water over him and throw him in a cell!' Another officer will behave differently. When he sees the drunken soldier, his reaction will be along the lines of: 'Just bring him in here! Shut the door and cover him with a wet blanket (so as not to leave any marks). I'll teach him a lesson! Kick him in the guts! That'll teach him not to drink next time. Now lads, beat him up as best you can. Go on! I'd do the same to you, my boys! Now wipe him off with snow.' It needs little imagination to see which of the officers is regarded more favourably by his superiors. The Intelligence directorate doesn't need very many people -- just the best.

The second most important quality is physical endurance. An officer who is offered a post is likely to be a runner, swimmer, skier or athlete in some form of sport demanding long and very concentrated physical effort. And a third factor is the physical dimensions of the man. Best of all is that he should be an enormous hulk with vast shoulders and huge fists. But this factor can be ignored if a man appears of small build and no broad shoulders but with a really strong character and a great capacity for physical endurance. Such a person is taken in, of course. The long history of mankind indicates that strong characters are met with no less frequently among short people than among giants.

Any young officer can be invited to join *spetsnaz* irrespective of his previous speciality in the armed forces. If he possesses the required qualities of an iron will, an air of unquestionable authority, ruthlessness and an independent way of taking decisions and acting, if he is by nature a gambler who is not afraid to take a chance with anything, including his own life, then he will eventually be invited to the headquarters of the military district. He will be led along the endless corridors to a little office where he will be interviewed by a general and some senior officers. The young officer will not of course know that the general is head of the Intelligence directorate of the military district or that the colonel next to him is head of the third department (*spetsnaz*) of the directorate.

The atmosphere of the interview is relaxed, with smiles and jokes on both sides. 'Tell us about yourself, lieutenant. What are your interests? What games do you play? You hold the divisional record on skis over ten kilometres? Very good. How did your men do in the last rifle-shooting test? How do you get along with your deputy? Is he a difficult chap? Uncontrolled character? Our information is that you tamed him. How did you manage it?'

The interview moves gradually on to the subject of the armed forces of the probable enemy and takes the form of a gentle examination.

'You have an American division facing your division on the front. The American division has "Lance" missiles. A nasty thing?'

'Of course, comrade general.'

'Just supposing, lieutenant, that you were chief of staff of the Soviet

division, how would you destroy the enemy's missiles?"

`With our own 9K21 missiles.'

`Very good, lieutenant, but the location of the American missiles is not known.'

`I would ask the air force to locate them and possibly bomb them.'

`But there's bad weather, lieutenant, and the anti-aircraft defences are strong.'

`Then I would send forward from our division a deep reconnaissance company to find the missiles, cut the throats of the missile crew and blow up the missiles.'

`Not a bad idea. Very good, in fact. Have you ever heard, lieutenant, that there are units in the American Army known as the "Green Berets"?'`

`Yes, I have heard.'

`What do you think of them?'

`I look at the question from two points of view -- the political and the military.'

`Tell us both of them, please.'

`They are mercenary cutthroats of American capitalism, looters, murderers and rapists. They burn down villages and massacre the inhabitants, women, children and old people.'

`Enough. Your second point of view?'

`They are marvellously well-trained units for operating behind the enemy's lines. Their job is to paralyse the enemy's system of command and control. They are a very powerful and effective instrument in the hands of commanders....'

`Very well. So what would you think, lieutenant, if we were to organise something similar in our army?'

`I think, comrade general, that it would be a correct decision. I am sure, comrade general, that that is our army's tomorrow.'

`It's the army's today, lieutenant. What would you say if we were to offer you the chance to become an officer in these troops? The discipline is like iron. Your authority as a commander would be almost absolute. You would be the one taking the decisions, not your superiors for you.'

`If I were to be offered such an opportunity, comrade general, I would accept.'

`All right, lieutenant, now you can go back to your regiment. Perhaps you will receive an offer. Continue your service and forget this conversation took place. You realise, of course, what will happen to you if anybody gets to know about what we have discussed?'

`I understand, comrade general.'

`We have informed your commanding officers, including the regimental commander, that you came before us as a candidate for posting to the Chinese frontier -- to Mongolia, Afghanistan, the islands of the Arctic Ocean -- that sort of thing. Goodbye for now, lieutenant.'

`Goodbye, comrade general.'

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An officer who joins *spetsnaz* from another branch of the armed forces does not have to go through any additional training course. He is posted straight to a regular unit and is given command of a platoon. I was present many times at exercises where a young officer who had taken over a platoon

knew a lot less about *spetsnaz* than many of his men and certainly his sergeants. But a young commander learns quickly, along with the privates. There is nothing to be ashamed of in learning. The officer could not know anything about the technique and tactics of *spetsnaz*.

It is not unusual for a young officer in these circumstances to begin a lesson, announce the subject and purpose of it, and then order the senior sergeant to conduct the lesson while he takes up position in the ranks along with the young privates. His platoon will already have a sense of the firmness of the commander's character. The men will already know that the commander is the leader of the platoon, the one unquestionable leader. There are questions he cannot yet answer and equipment he cannot yet handle. But they all know that, if it is a question of running ten kilometres, their new commander will be among the first home, and if it is a question of firing from a weapon their commander will of course be the best. In a few weeks the young officer will make his first parachute jump along with the youngest privates. He will be given the chance to jump as often as he likes. The company commander and the other officers will help him to understand what he did not know before. At night he will read his top secret instructions and a month later he will be ready to challenge any of his sergeants to a contest. A few months later he will be the best in all matters and will teach his platoon by simply giving them the most confident of all commands: 'Do as I do!'

An officer who gets posted to *spetsnaz* from other branches of the forces without having had any special training is of course an unusual person. The officers commanding *spetsnaz* seek out such people and trust them. Experience shows that these officers without special training produce much better results than those who have graduated from the special faculty at the Higher Airborne Command school. There is nothing surprising or paradoxical about this. If Mikhail Koshkin had had special training in designing tanks he would never have created the T-34 tank, the best in the world. Similarly, if someone had decided to teach Mikhail Kalashnikov how to design a sub-machine-gun the teaching might easily have ruined a self-educated genius.

The officers commanding the GRU believe that strong and independent people must be found and told what to do, leaving them with the right to choose which way to carry out the task given them. That is why the instructions for *spetsnaz* tactics are so short. All Soviet regulations are in general much shorter than those in Western armies, and a Soviet commander is guided by them less frequently than his opposite member in the West.

The officer of powerful build is only one type of *spetsnaz* officer. There is another type, whose build, width of shoulder and so forth are not taken into account, although the man must be no less strong of character. This type might be called the 'intelligentsia' of *spetsnaz*, and it includes officers who are not directly involved with the men in the ranks and who work with their heads far more than with their hands.

There is, of course, no precise line drawn between the two types. Take, for example, the officer-interpreters who would seem to belong to the 'intelligentsia' of *spetsnaz*. There is an officer-interpreter, with a fluent knowledge of at least two foreign languages, in every *spetsnaz* company. His

contact with the men in the company exists mainly because he teaches them foreign languages. But, as we know, this is not a subject that takes much time for the *spetsnaz* soldier. The interpreter is constantly at the company commander's side, acting as his unofficial adjutant. At first glance he is an 'intellectual'. But that is just the first impression. The fact is that the interpreter jumps along with the company and spends many days with it plodding across marshes and mountains, sand and snow. The interpreter is the first to drive nails into the heads of enemy prisoners to get the necessary information out of them. That is his work: to drag out finger-nails, cut tongues in half (known as 'making a snake') and stuff hot coals into prisoners' mouths. Military interpreters for the Soviet armed forces are trained at the Military Institute.

Among the students at the Institute there are those who are physically strong and tough, with strong nerves and characters of granite. These are the ones invited to join *spetsnaz*. Consequently, although the interpreter is sometimes regarded as a representative of the 'intelligentsia', it is difficult to distinguish him by appearance from the platoon commanders of the company in which he serves. His job is not simply to ask questions and wait for an answer. His job is to get the *right* answer. Upon that depends the success of the mission and the lives of an enormous number of people. He has to force the prisoner to talk if he does not want to, and having received an answer the interpreter must extract from the prisoner confirmation that it is the only right answer. That is why he has to apply not very 'intellectual' methods to his prisoner. With that in mind the interpreters in *spetsnaz* can be seen as neither commanders nor intellectuals, but a link between the two classes.

Pure representatives of *spetsnaz* 'intelligentsia' are found among the officers of the *spetsnaz* intelligence posts. They are selected from various branches, and their physical development is not a key factor. They are officers who have already been through the military schools and have served for not less than two years. After posting to the third faculty of the Military-Diplomatic Academy, they work in intelligence posts (RPs) and centres (RZs). Their job is to look for opportunities for recruitment and to direct the agent network. Some of them work with the agent-informer network, some with the *spetsnaz* network.

An officer working with the *spetsnaz* agent network is a *spetsnaz* officer in the full sense. But he is not dropped by parachute and he does not have to run, fight, shoot or cut people's throats. His job is to study the progress of thousands of people and discover among them individuals suitable for *spetsnaz*; to seek a way of approaching them and getting to know them; to establish and develop relations with them; and then to recruit them. These officers wear civilian clothes most of the time, and if they have to wear military uniform they wear the uniform of the branch in which they previously served: artillery, engineering troops, the medical service. Or they wear the uniform of the unit within which the secret intelligence unit of *spetsnaz* is concealed.

The senior command of *spetsnaz* consists of colonels and generals of the GRU who have graduated from one of the main faculties of the Military-Diplomatic Academy -- that is, the first or second faculties, and have worked for many years in the central *apparat* of the GRU and in its *rezidenturas* abroad. Each one of them has a first-class knowledge of a country or group of countries because of working abroad for a long time. If

there is a possibility of continuing to work abroad he will do so. But circumstances may mean that further trips abroad are impossible. In that case he continues to serve in the central *apparatus* of the GRU or in an Intelligence directorate of a military district, fleet or group of forces. He then has control of all the instruments of intelligence, including *spetsnaz*.

I frequently came across people of this class. In every case they were men who were silent and unsociable. They have elegant exteriors, good command of foreign languages and refined manners. They hold tremendous power in their hands and know how to handle authority.

Some however, are men who have never attended the Academy and have never been in countries regarded as potential enemies. They have advanced upwards thanks to their inborn qualities, to useful contacts which they know how to arrange and support, to their own striving for power, and to their continual and successful struggle for power which is full of cunning tricks and tremendous risks. They are intoxicated by power and the struggle for power. It is their only aim in life and they go at it, scrambling over the slippery slopes and summits. One of the elements of success in their life's struggle is of course the state of the units entrusted to them and their readiness at any moment to carry out any mission set by the higher command. No senior official in *spetsnaz* can be held up by considerations of a moral, juridical or any other kind. His upward flight or descent depends entirely on how a mission is carried out. You may be sure that *any* mission will be carried out at *any* cost and by *any* means.

I often hear it said that the Soviet soldier is a very bad soldier because he serves for only two years in the army. Some Western experts consider it impossible to produce a good soldier in such a short time.

It is true that the Soviet soldier is a conscript, but it must be remembered that he is conscript in a totally militarised country. It is sufficient to remember that even the leaders of the party in power in the Soviet Union have the military ranks of generals and marshals. The whole of Soviet society is militarised and swamped with military propaganda. From a very early age Soviet children engage in war games in a very serious way, often using real submachine guns (and sometimes even fighting tanks), under the direction of officers and generals of the Soviet Armed Forces.

Those children who show a special interest in military service join the Voluntary Society for Co-operation with the Army, Air Force and Fleet, known by its Russian initial letters as DOSAAF. DOSAAF is a para-military organisation with 15 million members who have regular training in military trades and engage in sports with a military application. DOSAAF not only trains young people for military service; it also helps reservists to maintain their qualifications after they have completed their service. DOSAAF has a colossal budget, a widespread network of airfields and training centres and clubs of various sizes and uses which carry out elementary and advanced training of military specialists of every possible kind, from snipers to radio operators, from fighter pilots to underwater swimmers, from glider pilots to astronauts, and from tank drivers to the people who train military doctors.

Many outstanding Soviet airmen, the majority of the astronauts

(starting with Yuri Gagarin), famous generals and European and world champions in military types of sport began their careers in DOSAAF, often at the age of fourteen.

The men in charge of DOSAAF locally are retired officers, generals and admirals, but the men in charge at the top of DOSAAF are generals and marshals on active service. Among the best-known leaders of the society were Army-General A. L. Getman, Marshal of the Air Force A. I. Pokryshkin, Army-General D. D. Lelyushenko and Admiral of the Fleet G. Yegorov. Traditionally the top leadership of DOSAAF includes leaders of the GRU and *spetsnaz*. At the present time (1986), for example, the first deputy chairman of DOSAAF is Colonel-General A. Odintsev. As long ago as 1941 he was serving in a *spetsnaz* detachment on the Western Front. The detachment was under the command of Artur Sprogis. Throughout his life Odintsev has been directly connected with the GRU and terrorism. At the present time his main job is to train young people of both sexes for the ordeal of fighting a war. The most promising of them are later sent to serve in *spetsnaz*.

When we speak about the Soviet conscript soldiers, and especially those who were taken into *spetsnaz*, we must remember that each one of them has already been through three or four years of intensive military training, has already made parachute jumps, fired a sub-machine gun and been on a survival course. He has already developed stamina, strength, drive and the determination to conquer. The difference between him and a regular soldier in the West lies in the fact that the regular soldier is paid for his efforts. Our young man gets no money. He is a fanatic and an enthusiast. He has to pay himself (though only a nominal sum) for being taught how to use a knife, a silenced pistol, a spade and explosives.

After completing his service in *spetsnaz* the soldier either becomes a regular soldier or he returns to 'peaceful' work and in his spare time attends one of the many DOSAAF clubs. Here is a typical example: Sergei Chizhik was born in 1965. While still at school he joined the DOSAAF club. He made 120 parachute jumps. Then he was called into the Army and served with special troops in Afghanistan. He distinguished himself in battle, and completed his service in 1985. In May 1986 he took part in a DOSAAF team in experiments in surviving in Polar conditions. As one of a group of Soviet 'athletes' he dropped by parachute on the North Pole.

DOSAAF is a very useful organisation for *spetsnaz* in many ways. The Soviet Union has signed a convention undertaking not to use the Antarctic for military purposes. But in the event of war it will of course be used by the military, and for that reason the corresponding experience has to be gained. That is why the training for a parachute drop on the South Pole in the Antarctic is being planned out by *spetsnaz* but to be carried out by DOSAAF. The difference is only cosmetic: the men who make the jump will be the very same cutthroats as went through the campaigns in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. They are now considered to be civilians, but they are under the complete control of generals like Odintsev, and in wartime they will become the very same *spetsnaz* troops as we now label contemptuously 'conscripts'.

Soviet military intelligence controls an enormous number of secret agents, who, in this context, are foreigners who have been recruited by the Soviet intelligence services and who carry out tasks for those services. They can be divided into two networks, the strategic and the operational. The first is recruited by the central *apparat* of the GRU and the GRU's numerous branches within the country and abroad. It works for the General Staff of the armed forces of the USSR and its agents are recruited mainly in the capitals of hostile states or in Moscow. The second is recruited by the intelligence directorates of fronts, fleets, groups of forces, military districts and the intelligence departments of armies and flotillas, independently of the central GRU *apparat*, and its agents serve the needs of a particular front, fleet, army and so on. They are recruited mainly from the territory of the Soviet Union or from countries friendly to it.

The division of agents into strategic and operational networks does not in any way indicate a difference in quality. The central *apparat* of the GRU naturally has many more agents than any military district group of forces, in fact more than all the fleets, military district armies and so forth put together. They are, broadly speaking, people who have direct access to official secrets. Nevertheless the operational network has also frequently obtained information of interest not just to local commanders but also to the top Soviet leadership.

During the Second World War the information coming from the majority of foreign capitals was not of interest to the Soviet Union. Useful information came from a very small number of locations, but however vital it was, it was insufficient to satisfy wartime demands. Consequently the operational network of the armies, fronts and fleets increased many times in size during the war and came to be of greater importance than the strategic network of agents of the central GRU *apparat*. This could happen again in another full-scale war if, contrary to the military and political consensus on future wars, it proved to be long drawn-out.

The *spetsnaz* agent network, an *operational* one, works for every military district, group of forces, fleet and front (which all have in addition an information network). Recruitment of agents is carried out mainly from the territory of the Soviet Union and states friendly to it. The main places where *spetsnaz* looks out for likely candidates for recruitment are: major ports visited by foreign tourists; and among foreign students. *Spetsnaz* examines the correspondence of Soviet citizens and of citizens of the satellite countries and listens in to the telephone conversations in the hope of coming across interesting contacts between Soviet and East European citizens and people living in countries that *spetsnaz* is interested in. Usually a foreign person who has been recruited can be persuaded to recruit several other people who may never have been in the Soviet Union or had any contact with Soviet citizens. It sometimes happens that *spetsnaz* officers turn up in somebody else's territory and recruit agents. Most of them do not have diplomatic cover and do not recruit agents in the capital cities, but drop off from Soviet merchant and fishing vessels in foreign ports and appear in the foreign country as drivers of Soviet trucks, Aeroflot pilots or stewards of Soviet trains. One proven place for recruiting is a Soviet cruise ship: two weeks at sea, vodka, caviar, the *dolce vita*, pleasant company and the ability to talk without fearing the local police.

If the reader had access to real dossiers on the secret agents of

spetsnaz he would be disappointed and probably shocked, because the agents of *spetsnaz* bear no resemblance to the fine, upstanding, young and handsome heroes of spy films. Soviet military intelligence is looking for an entirely different type of person as a candidate for recruitment. A portrait of an ideal agent for *spetsnaz* emerges something like this: a man of between fifty-five and sixty-five years of age who has never served in the army, never had access to secret documents, does not carry or own a weapon, knows nothing about hand-to-hand fighting, does not possess any secret equipment and doesn't support the Communists, does not read the newspapers, was never in the Soviet Union and has never met any Soviet citizens, leads a lonely, introspective life, far from other people, and is by profession a forester, fisherman, lighthouse-keeper, security guard or railwayman. In many cases such an agent will be a physical invalid. *Spetsnaz* is also on the lookout for women with roughly the same characteristics.

If *spetsnaz* has such a person in its network, that means: a. that he is certainly not under any suspicion on the part of the local police or security services; b. that in the event of any enquiries being made he will be the last person to be suspected; c. that there is practically nothing by which any suspicions could be confirmed, which in turn means that in peacetime the agent is almost totally guaranteed against the danger of failure or arrest; d. that in the event of war he will remain in the same place as he was in peacetime and not be taken into the army or the public service under the wartime mobilisation.

All this gives the *spetsnaz* agent network tremendous stability and vitality. There are, of course, exceptions to every rule, and in the rules of intelligence gathering there are a lot of exceptions. You can come across many different kinds of people among the agents of *spetsnaz*, but still *spetsnaz* tries mainly to recruit people of just that type. What use are they to the organisation?

The answer is that they are formidably useful. The fact is that the acts of terrorism are carried out in the main by the professional athletes of *spetsnaz* who have been excellently trained for handling the most difficult missions. But the *spetsnaz* professionals have a lot of enemies when they get into a foreign country: helicopters and police dogs, the checking of documents at the roadside, patrols, even children playing in the street who miss very little and understand a lot. The *spetsnaz* commandos need shelter where they can rest for a few days in relative peace, where they can leave their heavy equipment and cook their own food.

So the principal task of *spetsnaz* agents is to prepare a safe hiding place in advance, long before the commandos arrive in the country. These are some examples of hiding places prepared by *spetsnaz* agents. With GRU money a pensioner who is actually a *spetsnaz* agent buys a house on the outskirts of a town, and close to a big forest. In the house he builds, quite legally, a nuclear shelter with electric light, drains, water supply and a store of food. He then buys a car of a semi-military or military type, a Land Rover for example, which is kept permanently in the garage of the house along with a good store of petrol. With that the agent's work is done. He lives quietly, makes use of his country house and car, and in addition is paid for his services. He knows that at any moment he may have 'guests' in his house. But that doesn't frighten him. In case of arrest he can say that the commando troops seized him as a hostage and made use of his house, his shelter and car.

Or, the owner of a car dump takes an old, rusty railway container and drops it among the hundreds of scrap cars and a few motorcycles. For the benefit of the few visitors to the scrapyards who come in search of spare parts, the owner opens a little shop selling Coca-Cola, hot dogs, coffee and sandwiches. He always keeps a stock of bottled mineral water, tinned fish, meat and vegetables. The little shop also stocks comprehensive medical supplies.

Or perhaps the owner of a small firm buys a large, though old yacht. He tells his friends that he dreams of making a long journey under sail, which is why the yacht always has a lot of stores aboard. But he has no time to make the trip; what's more, the yacht is in need of repair which requires both time and money. So for the moment the old yacht lies there in a deserted bay among dozens of other abandoned yachts with peeling paint.

Large numbers of such places of refuge have been arranged. Places that can be used as shelters include caves, abandoned (or in some cases working) mines, abandoned industrial plants, city sewers, cemeteries (especially if they have family vaults), old boats, railway carriages and wagons, and so forth. Any place can be adapted as a shelter for the use of *spetsnaz* terrorists. But the place must be very well studied and prepared in advance. That is what the agents are recruited for.

This is not their only task. After the arrival of his 'guests' the agent can carry out many of their instructions: keeping an eye on what the police are doing, guarding the shelter and raising the alarm in good time, acting as a guide, obtaining additional information about interesting objects and people. Apart from all that an agent may be recruited specially to carry out acts of terrorism, in which case he may operate independently under the supervision of one person from the GRU, in a group of agents like himself, or in collaboration with the professionals of *spetsnaz* who have come from the Soviet Union.

The *spetsnaz* agent who is recruited to provide support for the operations of fighting groups in the way I have described, by acquiring a house and/or transport feels he is quite safe. The local police would have tremendous difficulty trying to run him to earth. Even if he were to be found and arrested it would be practically impossible to prove his guilt. But what the agent does not know is that danger threatens him from *spetsnaz* itself. Officers in the GRU who are discontented with the Communist regime may, either as a mark of protest or for other reasons, defect to the West. When they do, they are free to identify agents, including *spetsnaz* agents. Equally, once he has carried out his act of terrorism, the *spetsnaz* commando will destroy all traces of its work and any witnesses, including the agent who protected or helped the group in the first place. A man who is recruited as an agent to back up a commando group very rarely realises what will happen to him afterwards.

Thus if it is relatively easy to recruit a man to act as a 'sleeper', what about recruiting a foreigner to act as a real terrorist, prepared to commit murder, use explosives and fire buildings? Surely that is much more difficult?

The answer is that, surprisingly, it is not. A *spetsnaz* officer out to recruit agents for direct terrorist action has a wonderful base for his work

in the West. There are a tremendous number of people who are discontented and ready to protest against absolutely anything. And while millions protest peacefully, some individuals will resort to any means to make their protest. The *spetsnaz* officer has only to find the malcontent who is ready to go to extremes.

A man who protests against the presence of American troops in Europe and sprays slogans on walls is an interesting subject. If he not only paints slogans but is also prepared to fire at an American general, should he be given the sub-machine gun or an RPG-7 grenade-launcher to do the job, he is an exceptionally interesting person. His goals tally perfectly with those of the senior officers of the GRU.

In France protesters fired an RPG-7 grenade-launcher at the reactor of a nuclear power station. Where they got the Soviet-made weapon I do not know. Perhaps it was just lying there at the roadside. But if it was a *spetsnaz* officer who had the good fortune to meet those people and provide them with their hardware, he would without further ado have been given a Red Banner medal and promotion. The senior officers of the GRU have a particular dislike of Western nuclear power stations, which reduce the West's dependence on imported oil (including Soviet oil) and make it stronger and more independent. They are one of *spetsnaz*'s most important targets.

On another occasion a group of animal rights activists in the UK injected bars of chocolate with poison. If *spetsnaz* were able to contact that group, and there is every chance it might, it would be extremely keen (without, of course, mentioning its name) to suggest to them a number of even more effective ways of protesting. Activists, radicals, peace campaigners, green party members: as far as the leaders of the GRU are concerned, these are like ripe water-melons, green on the outside, but red on the inside -- and mouth-watering.

So there is a good base for recruiting. There are enough discontented people in the West who are ready not only to kill others but also to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of their own particular ideals which *spetsnaz* may exploit. The *spetsnaz* officer has only to find and take advantage of the malcontent who is ready to go to extremes.

The *spetsnaz* network of agents has much in common with international terrorism, a common centre, for example -- yet they are different things and must not be confused. It would be foolhardy to claim that international terrorism came into being on orders from Moscow. But to claim that, without Moscow's support, international terrorism would never have assumed the scale it has would not be rash. Terrorism has been born in a variety of situations, in various circumstances and in different kinds of soil. Local nationalism has always been a potent source, and the Soviet Union supports it in any form, just as it offers concrete support to extremist groups operating within nationalist movements. Exceptions are made, of course, of the nationalist groups within the Soviet Union and the countries under its influence.

If groups of extremists emerge in areas where there is no sure Soviet influence, you may be sure that the Soviet Union will very shortly be their best friend. In the GRU alone there are two independent and very powerful bodies dealing with questions relating to extremists and terrorists. First,

there is the 3rd Direction of the GRU which studies terrorist organisations and ways of penetrating them. Then there is the 5th Directorate which is in charge of all intelligence-gathering at lower levels, including that of *spetsnaz*.

The GRU's tactics toward terrorists are simple: never give them any orders, never tell them what to do. They are destroying Western civilisation: they know how to do it, the argument goes, so let them get on with it unfettered by petty supervision. Among them there are idealists ready to die for *their own* ideas. So let them die for them. The most important thing is to preserve their illusion that they are completely free and independent.

Moscow is an important centre of international terrorism, not because it is from Moscow that instructions are issued, but because selected terrorist groups or organisations which *ask for help* may be given it if little risk is attached to doing so. Moscow's deep involvement with terrorism is a serious political affair. One 'resistance movement' has to have more financial help, another less. One 'Red Army' must have modern weapons and an unlimited supply of ammunition, another one will do better with old weapons and a limited supply of ammunition. One movement is to be recognised, while another will be condemned in words but supported in practice. 'Independent' terrorists give little thought to where the money comes from with which they travel the countries of the world, or who provides the Kalashnikov submachine-guns and the cartridges to go with them, or who supplies the instructors who teach them and train them.

But just look at the 'independent' Palestinians: they virtually throw their ammunition away. And if one watches a film about the fighting in Afghanistan and then one from the streets of Beirut the difference is very striking. The Afghan resistance fighters count every round, whereas the groups fighting each other in the streets of Beirut don't even bother to aim when they fire; they simply fire into the air in long bursts, although it means they are wasting someone else's money. Whose money is it?

When I was beginning my military service I was taught to count every round. Cartridges are metal and a lot of hard work. It is more difficult and more expensive to make a cartridge than to make a fountain pen. And another reason for being careful with ammunition is so that you are never without it at a critical moment. Supplying an army with ammunition is a complex logistical problem. If the transport carrying ammunition arrives even a few minutes after you have spent all your ammunition without thinking, then you are dead. But there are no such problems in Beirut. Nobody tells the conflicting groups what the ammunition costs. Nobody tells them the cost of the lives they cut off every day. Nobody mentions the danger that the regular supply of ammunition may be late. The suppliers are certain that it will not be late.

The Soviet Union condemns the civil war in the Lebanon. But there is no need for it to condemn the war. All it has to do is hold back the next transport of ammunition, and war will cease.

Apart from military and financial support, the Soviet Union also provides the terrorists aid in the form of training. Training centres have been set up in the Soviet Union for training terrorists from a number of

different countries. Similar centres have been set up in the countries of Eastern Europe, in Cuba and elsewhere. I know the centre in Odessa very well. Officially it belongs to the 10th Chief Directorate of the General Staff which deals with the export of weapons, sends Soviet military advisers to foreign countries and trains foreigners to be fighters and terrorists. In the early 1960s this centre was a branch of the higher infantry officers school. An intelligence faculty was formed in it for Soviet students, many of whom ended up in the GRU and *spetsnaz*, while the remainder of the huge area, classrooms and living quarters, was given over entirely to the centre for training foreign fighters. When I was in Odessa most of the people under training were intended for work in black Africa. Not all of them came from Africa, quite a lot of them were from Cuba, but that was where the majority were destined. The difference between the training and the living conditions of the Soviet and the foreign students was tremendous.

The foreigners were better fed and wore Soviet officers' field uniforms, though without any badges of rank. They had practically no theoretical tuition at all. But their practical training was very concentrated, even by Soviet standards. For them there was no shortage of ammunition. Shooting went on in their camp day and night.

The foreigners were kept in strict isolation. The only outsiders who could see them were the Soviet students and then only through the barbed wire. The total isolation had a bad effect on some of the foreign students. But since they could not break out of it, the Cuban minister of defence stepped in and ordered some girls to be sent from Cuba who were trained as nurses for partisan units at the Odessa centre. It was interesting to note that the soldiers were under training for one year and the officers for two years, but the nurses' training lasted ten years or more. At the end of their training the nurses were sent back to Cuba and some younger ones were sent to replace them. There were no more psychological problems at the training centre.

Foreigners belonging to 'liberation movements' who turn up in the Soviet Union are not generally recruited by the Soviet intelligence services. Experience has shown that the terrorist who considers himself independent and who kills people because of *his own* beliefs is more effective than the one who fights on the orders of other people. For his own ideas the terrorist will take risks and sacrifice his life, but he is scarcely likely to do so merely on instructions from foreigners. So why recruit him?

But there are important exceptions. Every terrorist is studied carefully during his training, and among them will be noted the potential leaders and the born rebels who will not submit to any authority. Of equal importance are the students' weaknesses and ambitions, and their relationships with one another. Some time, many years ahead, one of them may become an important leader, but not one approved by Moscow, so it is vital to know in advance who his likely friends and enemies will be.

As the students are themselves studied during training, some emerge as exceptions among the crowd and as likely material for recruitment. Recruitment at the training centres is carried on simultaneously by two different GRU organisations. The 3rd Direction recruits informers, who will

subsequently remain inside the 'national liberation movements' and will pass on to the heads of the GRU the internal secrets of the movements. The 5th Directorate of the GRU recruits some of the students to be part of the *spetsnaz* network of agents. This is a fairly complicated process. Formally the candidate remains in his 'liberation movement' and works there. In fact he starts to operate on instructions from the GRU. It is a very delicate situation and all possible steps are taken to protect the reputation of the USSR in case of failure. With this aim in view the carefully selected candidate, unaware of his position, is transferred to training in one of the countries under Soviet influence. Recruitment then takes place, but not by Soviet Intelligence, rather by the Intelligence service of one of the Soviet satellite countries.

The recruitment of a full-blown terrorist is a very different matter from the recruitment of an informer-agent. The terrorist has to go through very tough training which becomes a daily, and a nightly nightmare. He dreams of the training coming to an end: he yearns for the real thing. The instructors talk to him and ask him what he would like, as a terrorist, to do. The terrorist tells them. The instructors then 'think about it' and a few days later tell him it is not possible. The torture of the training continues. Again the question of what he wants to do is raised, and again he is turned down. Various reasons are given for refusing him: we value your life too highly to send you on such a risky mission; such an act might have unwanted repercussions on your family, your comrades, and so on. Thus the range of choice is gradually narrowed down until the terrorist suggests exactly what the heads of Soviet Military intelligence want. They 'think about it' for a few days and finally give their agreement in such a way that it does not appear to be something wanted by the GRU but rather a compromise or a concession to the terrorist: if he really thinks it necessary to do it, no obstacles will be put in his way.

I have of course simplified a process which is in practice a very complicated affair.

The reward for the GRU is that a terrorist doing work for *spetsnaz* does not, in the great majority of cases, suspect he is being used. He is utterly convinced that he is acting independently, of his own will and by his own choice. The GRU does not leave its signature or his fingerprints around.

Even in cases where it is not a question of individual terrorists but of experienced leaders of terrorist organisations, the GRU takes extraordinary steps to ensure that not only all outsiders but even the terrorist leader himself should not realise the extent of his subordination to *spetsnaz* and consequently to the GRU. The leader of the terrorists has a vast field of action and a wide choice. But there are operations and acts of terrorism on which *spetsnaz* will spend any amount of money, will provide any kind of weapon, will help in obtaining passports and will organise hiding places. But there are also terrorist acts for which *spetsnaz* has no money, no weapons, no reliable people and no hiding places. The leader of the terrorists is at complete liberty to choose the mission he wants, but without weapons, money and other forms of support his freedom to choose is suddenly severely curtailed.

Chapter 9. Weapons and Equipment

The standard issue of weapons to a *spetsnaz* is a sub-machine gun, 400 rounds of ammunition, a knife, and six hand grenades or a light single-action grenade-launcher. During a drop by parachute the sub-machine gun is carried in such a way as not to interfere with the main (or the reserve) parachute opening correctly and promptly, and not to injure the parachute on landing. But the large number of fastenings make it impossible for the parachutist to use the gun immediately after landing. So he should not be left defenceless at that moment, the parachutist also carries a P-6 silent pistol. After my escape to the West I described this pistol to Western experts and was met with a certain scepticism. Today a great deal that I told the experts has been confirmed, and examples of the silent pistol have been found in Afghanistan. (*Jane's Defence Weekly* has published some excellent photographs and a description of this unusual weapon.) For noiseless shooting over big distances PBS silencers are used and some soldiers carry them on their submachine guns.

Officers, radio-operators and cypher clerks have a smaller set of weapons: a short-barrelled sub-machine gun (AKR) of 160 rounds, a pistol and a knife.

Apart from personal weapons a *spetsnaz* group carries collective weapons in the form of RPG-16D grenade-launchers, Strela-2 ground-to-air missiles, mines for various purposes, plastic explosive, snipers' rifles and other weapons. The unit learns how to handle group weapons but does not keep them permanently with it: group weapons are held in the *spetsnaz* stores, and the quantity needed by the unit is determined before each operation. Operations can often be carried out simply with each man's personal weapons.

A group which sets out on an operation with only personal weapons can receive the group weapons it needs later, normally by parachute. And in case of pursuit a group may abandon not only the group weapons but some of their personal weapons as well. For most soldiers, to lose their weapons is an offence punished by a stretch in a penal battalion. But *spetsnaz*, which enjoys special trust and operates in quite unusual conditions, has the privilege of resolving the dilemma for itself although every case is, of course, later investigated. The commander and his deputy have to demonstrate that the situation really was critical.

Unlike the airborne and the air assault forces, *spetsnaz* does not have any heavy weapons like artillery, mortars or BMD fighting vehicles. But 'does not have' does not mean 'does not use'.

On landing in enemy territory a group may begin its operation by capturing a car or armoured troop-carrier belonging to the enemy. Any vehicle, including one with a red cross on it, is fair game for *spetsnaz*. It can be used for a variety of purposes: for getting quickly away from the drop zone, for example, or for transporting the group's mobile base, or even for mounting the assault on an especially important target. In the course of exercises on Soviet territory *spetsnaz* groups have frequently captured tanks and used them for attacking targets. An ideal situation is considered to be when the enemy uses tanks to guard especially important installations, and

spetsnaz captures one or several of them and immediately attacks the target. In that case there is no need for a clumsy slow-moving tank to make the long trip to its target.

Many other types of enemy weapons, including mortars and artillery, can be used as heavy armament. The situation may arise in the course of a war where a *spetsnaz* group operating on its own territory will obtain the enemy's heavy weapons captured in battle, then get through to enemy territory and operate in his rear in the guise of genuine fighting units. This trick was widely used by the Red Army in the Civil War.

The Soviet high command even takes steps to acquire foreign weapons in peacetime. In April 1985 four businessmen were arrested in the USA. Their business was officially dealing in arms. Their illegal business was also dealing in arms, and they had tried to ship 500 American automatic rifles, 100,000 rounds of ammunition and 400 night-vision sights to countries of the Soviet bloc.

Why should the Soviet Union need American weapons in such quantities? To help the national liberation armies which it sponsors? For that purpose the leadership has no hesitation in providing Kalashnikov automatics, simpler and cheaper, with no problems of ammunition supply. Perhaps the 500 American rifles were for studying and copying? But the Soviet Union has captured M-16 rifles from many sources, Vietnam for one. They have already been studied down to the last detail. And there is no point in copying them since, in the opinion of the Soviet high command, the Kalashnikov meets all its requirements.

It is difficult to think of any other reason for such a deal than that they were for equipping *spetsnaz* groups. Not for all of them, of course, but for the groups of professional athletes, especially those who will be operating where the M-16 rifle is widely used and where consequently there will be plenty of ammunition for it to be found.

The quantity of rifles, sights and rounds of ammunition is easy to explain: 100 groups of five men each, in which everybody except the radio-operator has a night-sight (four to a group); for each rifle half a day's requirements (200 rounds), the rest to be taken from the enemy. American sights are used mainly because batteries and other essential spares can be obtained from the enemy.

This is clearly not the only channel through which standard American arms and ammunition are obtained. We know about the businessmen who have been arrested. There are no doubt others who have not been arrested yet.

The weapons issued to *spetsnaz* are very varied, covering a wide range, from the guitar string (used for strangling someone in an attack from behind) to small portable nuclear charges with a TNT equivalent of anything from 800 to 2000 tons. The *spetsnaz* arsenal includes swiftly acting poisons, chemicals and bacteria. At the same time the mine remains the favourite weapon of *spetsnaz*. It is not by chance that the predecessors of the modern *spetsnaz* men bore the proud title of guards minelayers. Mines are employed at all stages of a group's operations. Immediately after a landing, mines may be laid where the parachutes are hidden and later the group will lay mines along the roads and paths by which they get away from the enemy. The mines very widely employed by *spetsnaz* in the 1960s and 1970s were the

MON-50, MON-100, MON-200 and the MON-300. The MON is a directional anti-personnel mine, and the figure indicates the distance the fragments fly. They do not fly in different directions but in a close bunch in the direction the minelayer aims them. It is a terrible weapon, very effective in a variety of situations. For example, if a missile installation is discovered and it is not possible to get close to it, a MON-300 can be used to blow it up. They are at their most effective if the explosion is aimed down a street, road, forest path, ravine, gorge or valley. MON mines are often laid so that the target is covered by cross fire from two or more directions.

There are many other kinds of mines used by *spetsnaz*, each of which has been developed for a special purpose: to blow up a railway bridge, to destroy an oil storage tank (and at the same time ignite the contents), and to blow up constructions of cement, steel, wood, stone and other materials. It is a whole science and a real art. The *spetsnaz* soldier has a perfect command of it and knows how to blow up very complicated objects with the minimal use of explosive. In case of need he knows how to make explosives from material lying around. I have seen a *spetsnaz* officer make several kilograms of a sticky brown paste out of the most inoffensive and apparently non-explosive materials in about an hour. He also made the detonator himself out of the most ordinary things that a *spetsnaz* soldier carries with him -- an electric torch, a razor blade which he made into a spring, a box of matches and finally the bullet from a tracer cartridge. The resulting mechanism worked perfectly. In some cases simpler and more accessible things can be used -- gas and oxygen balloons of paraffin with the addition of filings of light metals. A veteran of this business, Colonel Starinov, recalls in his memoirs making a detonator out of one matchbox.

On the subject of mines, we must mention a terrible *spetsnaz* weapon known as the Strela-Blok. This weapon was used in the second half of the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s. It is quite possible that by now it has been very substantially improved. In a sense it can be described as an anti-aircraft mine, because it operates on the same principle as the mine laid at the side of a road which acts against a passing vehicle. It is related to mines which are based on portable grenade-launchers which fire at the side of a tank or an armoured personnel carrier.

The Strela-Blok is an ordinary Soviet Strela-2 portable missile (a very exact copy of the American Red Eye). A *spetsnaz* group carries one or several of these missiles with it. In the area of a major airfield the launch tube is attached to a tall tree (or the roof of a building, a tall mast, a hayrick) and camouflaged. The missile is usually installed at a short distance from the end of the runway. That done, the group leaves the area. The missile is launched automatically. A clockwork mechanism operates first, allowing the group to retire to a safe distance, then, when the set time has run out (it could be anything from an hour to several days) a very simple sound detector is switched on which reacts to the noise of an aircraft engine of a particular power. So long as the engine noise is increasing nothing happens (it means the aircraft is coming nearer), but as soon as the noise decreases the mechanism fires. The infra-red warhead reacts to the heat radiated by the engine, follows the aircraft and catches up with it.

Imagine yourself to be the officer commanding an aircraft base. One plane (perhaps with a nuclear bomb on board) is shot down by a missile as it takes off. You cancel all flights and despatch your people to find the culprits. They of course find nobody. Flights are resumed and your next plane is shot down on take-off. What will you do then? What will you do if the group has set up five Strela-Blok missiles around the base and anti-infantry mines on the approaches to them? How do you know that there are only five missiles?

Another very effective *spetsnaz* weapon is the RPO-A flamethrower. It weighs eleven kilograms and has a single action. Developed in the first half of the 1970s, it is substantially superior to any flame-throwers produced at that time in any other country. The principal difference lies in the fact that the foreign models of the time threw a stream of fire at a range of about thirty metres, and a considerable part of the fuel was burnt up in the trajectory.

The RPO-A, however, fires not a stream but a capsule, projected out of a lightweight barrel by a powder charge. The inflammable mixture flies to the target in a capsule and bursts into flame only when it strikes the target. The RPO-A has a range of more than 400 metres, and the effectiveness of one shot is equal to that of the explosion of a 122 mm howitzer shell. It can be used with special effectiveness against targets vulnerable to fire -- fuel stores, ammunition dumps, and missiles and aircraft standing on the ground.

A more powerful *spetsnaz* weapon is the GRAD-V multiple rocket-launcher, a system of firing in salvos developed for the airborne forces. There the weapon can be mounted on the chassis of a GAZ-66 truck. It has 12 launching tubes which fire jet-propelled shells. But apart from the vehicle-mounted version, GRAD-V is produced in a portable version. In case of need the airborne units are issued with separate tubes and the shells to go with them. The tube is set up on the ground in the simplest of bases. It is aimed in the right direction and fired. Several separate tubes are usually aimed at one target and fired at practically the same time. Fired from a vehicle its accuracy is very considerable, but from the ground it is not so great. But in either case the effect is very considerable. The GRAD-V is largely a weapon for firing to cover a wide area and its main targets are: communications centres, missile batteries, aircraft parks and other very vulnerable targets.

The airborne forces use both versions of the GRAD-V. *Spetsnaz* uses only the second, portable version. Sometimes, to attack a very important target, for example a submarine in its berth, a major *spetsnaz* unit may fire GRAD-V shells simultaneously from several dozen or even hundreds of tubes.

In *spetsnaz* the most up-to-date weapons exist side by side with a weapon which has long been forgotten in all other armies or relegated to

army museums. One such weapon is the crossbow. However amusing the reader may find this, the crossbow is in fact a terrible weapon which can put an arrow right through a man at a great distance and with great accuracy. Specialists believe that, at the time when the crossbow was competing with the musket, the musket came off best only because it made such a deafening noise that this had a greater effect on the enemy than the soft whistle of an arrow from a crossbow. But in speed of firing, accuracy and reliability the crossbow was superior to the musket, smaller in size and weight, and killed people just as surely as the musket. Because it made no noise when fired it did not have the same effect as a simultaneous salvo from a thousand muskets.

But that noiseless action is exactly what *spetsnaz* needs today. The modern crossbow is, of course, very different in appearance and construction from the crossbows of previous centuries. It has been developed using the latest technology. It is aimed by means of optical and thermal sights of a similar quality to those used on modern snipers' rifles. The arrows are made with the benefit of the latest research in ballistics and aerodynamics. The bow itself is a very elegant affair, light, reliable and convenient. To make it easy to carry it folds up.

The crossbow is not a standard weapon in *spetsnaz*, although enormous attention is given in the athletic training units to training men to handle the weapon. In case of necessity a *spetsnaz* group may be issued with one or two crossbows to carry out some special mission in which a man has to be killed without making any noise at all and in darkness at a distance of several dozen metres. It is true that the crossbow can in no way be considered a rival to the sniper's rifle. The Dragunov sniper's rifle is a marvellous standard *spetsnaz* weapon. But if you fit a silencer to a sniper's rifle it greatly reduces its accuracy and range. For shooting accurately and noiselessly, sniper's rifles have been built with a 'heavy barrel', in which the silencer is an organic part of the weapon. This is a wonderful and a reliable weapon. Nevertheless the officers commanding the GRU consider that a *spetsnaz* commander must have a very wide collection of weapons from which he can choose for a particular situation. It is possible, indeed certain, that special situations will arise, in which the commander preparing for an operation will want to choose a rather unusual weapon.

The most frightening, demoralising opponent of the *spetsnaz* soldier has always been and always will be the dog. No electronic devices and no enemy firepower has such an effect on his morale as the appearance of dogs. The enemy's dogs always appear at the most awkward moment, when a group exhausted by a long trek is enjoying a brief uneasy sleep, when their legs are totally worn out and their ammunition is used up.

Surveys conducted among soldiers, sergeants and officers in *spetsnaz* produce the same answer again and again: the last thing they want to come up against is the enemy's dogs.

The heads of the GRU have conducted some far-reaching researches into this question and come to the conclusion that the best way to deal with dogs is to use dogs oneself. On the southeastern outskirts of Moscow there is the Central Red Star school of military dog training, equipped with enormous kennels.

The Central Military school trains specialists and rears and trains dogs for many different purposes in the Soviet Army, including *spetsnaz*. The history of using dogs in the Red Army is a rich and very varied one. In the Second World War the Red Army used 60,000 of its own dogs in the fighting. This was possible, of course, only because of the existence of the Gulag, the enormous system of concentration camps in which the rearing and training of dogs had been organised on an exceptionally high level in terms of both quantity and quality.

To the figure of 60,000 army dogs had to be added an unknown, but certainly enormous, number of transport dogs. Transport dogs were used in winter time (and throughout the year in the north) for delivering ammunition supplies to the front line, evacuating the wounded and similar purposes. The service dogs included only those which worked, not in a pack but as individuals, carrying out different, precisely defined functions for which each one had been trained. The Red Army's dogs had respected military trades: *razvedka*; searching for wounded on the battle field; delivery of official messages. The dogs were used by the airborne troops and by the guards minelayers (now *spetsnaz*) for security purposes. But the trades in which the Red Army's dogs were used on the largest scale were mine detection and destroying tanks.

Even as early as 1941 special service units (*Spets sluzhba*) started to be formed for combating the enemy's tanks. Each unit consisted of four companies with 126 dogs in each company, making 504 dogs in each unit. Altogether during the war there were two special service regiments formed and 168 independent units, battalions, companies and platoons.

The dogs selected for the special service units were strong and healthy and possessed plenty of stamina. Their training was very simple. First, they were not fed for several days, and then they began to receive food near some tanks: the meat was given to them from the tank's lower hatch. So the dog learned to go beneath the tank to be fed. The training sessions quickly became more elaborate. The dogs were unleashed in the face of tanks approaching from quite considerable distances and taught to get under the tank, not from the front but from the rear. As soon as the dog was under the tank, it stopped and the dog was fed. Before a battle the dog would not be fed. Instead, an explosive charge of between 4 and 4.6 kg with a pin detonator was attached to it. It was then sent under the enemy tanks.

Anti-tank dogs were employed in the biggest battles, before Moscow, before Stalingrad, and at Kursk. The dogs destroyed a sufficient number of tanks for the survivors to be considered worthy of the honour of taking part in the victory parade in the Red Square.

The war experience was carefully analysed and taken into account. The dog as a faithful servant of man in war has not lost its importance, and *spetsnaz* realises that a lot better than any other branch of the Soviet Army. Dogs perform a lot of tasks in the modern *spetsnaz*. There is plenty of evidence that *spetsnaz* has used them in Afghanistan to carry out their traditional tasks -- protecting groups from surprise attack, seeking out the enemy, detecting mines, and helping in the interrogation of captured Afghan resistance fighters. They are just as mobile as the men themselves, since they can be dropped by parachute in special soft containers.

In the course of a war in Europe *spetsnaz* will use dogs very extensively for carrying out the same functions, and for one other task of exceptional importance -- destroying the enemy's nuclear weapons. It is a

great deal easier to teach a dog to get up to a missile or an aircraft unnoticed than it is to get it to go under a roaring, thundering tank. As before, the dog would carry a charge weighing about 4 kg, but charges of that weight are today much more powerful than they were in the last war, and the detonators are incomparably more sophisticated and foolproof than they were then. Detonators have been developed for this kind of charge which detonate only on contact with metal but do not go off on accidental contact with long grass, branches or other objects. The dog is an exceptionally intelligent animal which with proper training quickly becomes capable of learning to seek out, identify correctly and attack important targets. Such targets include complicated electronic equipment, airdrops, missiles, aircraft, staff cars, cars carrying VIPs, and occasionally individuals. All of this makes the *spetsnaz* dog a frightening and dangerous enemy.

Apart from everything else, the presence of dogs with a *spetsnaz* group appreciably raises the morale of the officers and the men. Some especially powerful and vicious dogs are trained for one purpose alone -- to guard the group and to destroy the enemy's dogs if they appear.

In discussing *spetsnaz* weapons we must mention also the 'invisible weapon' -- sambo. Sambo is a kind of fighting without rules which was originated in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and has since been substantially developed and improved.

The originator of sambo was B. S. Oshchepkov, an outstanding Russian sportsman. Before the Revolution he visited Japan where he learnt judo. Oshchepkov became a black belt and was a personal friend of the greatest master of this form of fighting, Jigaro Kano, and others. During the Revolution Oshchepkov returned to Russia and worked as a trainer in special Red Army units.

After the Civil War Oshchepkov was made senior instructor in the Red Army in various forms of unarmed combat. He worked out a series of ways in which a man could attack or defend himself against one or several opponents armed with a variety of weapons. The new system was based on karate and judo, but Oshchepkov moved further and further away from the traditions of the Japanese and Chinese masters and created new tricks and combinations of his own.

Oshchepkov took the view that one had to get rid of all artificial limitations and rules. In real combat nobody observes any rules, so why introduce them artificially at training sessions and so penalise the sportsmen? Oshchepkov firmly rejected all the noble rules of chivalry and permitted his pupils to employ any tricks and rules. In order that a training session should not become a bloodbath Oshchepkov instructed his pupils only to imitate some of the more violent holds although in real combat they were permitted. Oshchepkov brought his system of unarmed combat up to date. He invented ways of fighting opponents who were armed, not with Japanese bamboo sticks, but with more familiar weapons -- knives, revolvers, knuckle-dusters, rifles with and without bayonets, metal bars and spades. He also perfected responses to various combat combinations -- one with a long spade, the other with a short one; one with a spade, the other with a gun; one with a metal bar, the other with a piece of rope; one with an axe, three unarmed; and so forth.

As a result of its rapid development the new style of combat won the right to independent existence and its own name -- sambo -- which is an abbreviation of the Russian for 'self-defence without weapons' (*samooborona bez oruzhiya*). The reader should not be misled by the word 'defence'. In the Soviet Union the word 'defence' has always been understood in a rather special way. *Pravda* formulated the idea succinctly before the Second World War: 'The best form of defence is rapid attack until the enemy is completely destroyed.'¹

¹ *Pravda*, 14 August 1939.

Today sambo is one of the compulsory features in the training of every *spetsnaz* fighting man. It is one of the most popular spectator sports in the Soviet Army. It is not only in the Army, of course, that they engage in sambo, but the Soviet Army always comes out on top. Take, for example, the championship for the prize awarded by the magazine *Sovetsky Voin* in 1985. This is a very important championship in which sportsmen from many different clubs compete. But as early as the quarter finals, of the eight men left in the contest one was from the *Dinamo* club (an MVD lieutenant), one from the mysterious *Zenit* club, and the rest were from ZSKA, the Soviet Army club.

The words 'without weapons' in the name sambo should not mislead the reader. Sambo permits the use of any objects that can be used in a fight, up to revolvers and sub-machine-guns. It may be said that a hammer is not a weapon, and that is true if the hammer is in the hands of an inexperienced person. But in the hands of a master it becomes a terrible weapon. An even more frightful weapon is a spade in the hands of a skilled fighter. It was with the Soviet Army spade that we began this book. Ways of using it are one of the dramatic elements of sambo. A *spetsnaz* soldier can kill people with a spade at a distance of several metres as easily, freely and silently as with a P-6 gun.

There are two sides to sambo: sporting sambo and battle sambo. Sambo as a sport is just two men without weapons, restricted by set rules. Battle sambo is what we have described above. There is plenty of evidence that many of the holds in battle sambo are not so much secret as of limited application. Only in special teaching institutions, like the *Dinamo* Army and *Zenit* clubs, are these holds taught. They are needed only by those directly involved in actions connected with the defence and consolidation of the regime.

The *spetsnaz* naval brigades are much better equipped technically than those operating on land, for good reasons. A fleet always had and always will have much more horsepower per man than an army. A man can move over the earth simply using his muscles, but he will not get far swimming in the sea with his muscles alone. Consequently, even at the level of the ordinary fighting man there is a difference in the equipment of naval units and ground forces. An ordinary rank and file swimmer in the *spetsnaz* may be issued with a relatively small apparatus enabling him to swim under the water at a speed of up to 15 kilometres an hour for several hours at a time. Apart from such individual sets there is also apparatus for two or three men, built on the pattern of an ordinary torpedo. The swimmers sit on it as

if on horseback. And in addition to this light underwater apparatus, extensive use is made of midget submarines.

The Soviet Union began intensive research into the development of midget submarines in the middle of the 1930s. As usual, the same task was presented to several groups of designers at the same time, and there was keen competition between them. In 1936 a government commission studied four submissions: the Moskito, the Blokha, and the APSS and Pigmei. All four could be transported by small freighters or naval vessels. At that time the Soviet Union had completed development work on its K-class submarines, and there was a plan that each K-class submarine should be able to carry one light aircraft or one midget submarine. At the same time experiments were also being carried out for the purpose of assessing the possibility of transporting another design of midget submarine (similar to the APSS) in a heavy bomber.

In 1939 the Soviet Union put into production the M-400 midget submarine designed by the designer of the 'Flea' prototype. The M-400 was a mixture of a submarine and a torpedo boat. It could stay for a long time under water, then surface and attack an enemy at very high speed like a fast torpedo boat. The intention was also to use it in another way, closing in on the enemy at great speed like a torpedo boat, then submerging and attacking at close quarters like an ordinary submarine.

Among the trophies of war were the Germans' own midget submarines and plans for the future, all of which were very widely used by Soviet designers. Interest in German projects has not declined. In 1976 there were reports concerning a project for a German submarine of only 90 tons displacement. Soviet military intelligence then started a hunt for the plans of this vessel and for information about the people who had designed them.

It should never be thought that interest in foreign weapons is dictated by the Soviet Union's technical backwardness. The Soviet Union has many talented designers who have often performed genuine technical miracles. It is simply that the West always uses its own technical ideas, while Soviet engineers use their own and other people's. In the Soviet Union in recent years remarkable types of weapons have been developed, including midget submarines with crews of from one to five men. The *spetsnaz* naval brigades have several dozen midget submarines, which may not seem to be very many, but it is more than all other countries have between them. Side by side with the usual projects intensive work is being done on the creation of hybrid equipment which will combine the qualities of a submarine and an underwater tractor. The transportation of midget submarines is carried out by submarines of larger displacement, fighting ships and also ships from the fishing fleet. In the 1960s in the Caspian Sea the trials took place of a heavy glider for transporting a midget submarine. The result of the trial is not known. If such a glider has been built then in the event of war we can expect to see midget submarines appear in the most unexpected places, for example in the Persian Gulf, which is so vital to the West, even *before* the arrival of Soviet troops and the Navy. In the 1970s the Soviet Union was developing a hydroplane which, after landing on water, could be submerged several metres below water. I do not know the results of this work.

Naval *spetsnaz* can be very dangerous. Even in peacetime it is much more

active than the *spetsnaz* brigades in the land forces. This is understandable, because *spetsnaz* in the land forces can operate only in the territory of the Soviet Union and its satellites and in Afghanistan, while the naval brigades have an enormous field of operations in the international waters of the world's oceans and sometimes in the territorial waters of sovereign states.

In the conduct of military operations the midget submarine can be a very unpleasant weapon for the enemy. It is capable of penetrating into places in which the ordinary ship cannot operate. The construction of several midget submarines may be cheaper than the construction of one medium-sized submarine, while the detection of several midget submarines and their destruction can be a very much more difficult task for an enemy than the hunt for the destruction of one medium-sized submarine.

The midget submarine is a sort of mobile base for divers. The submarine and the divers become a single weapons system which can be used with success against both seaborne and land targets.

The *spetsnaz* seaborne brigades can in a number of cases be an irreplaceable weapon for the Soviet high command. Firstly, they can be used for clearing the way for a whole Soviet fleet, destroying or putting out of action minefields and acoustic and other detection systems of the enemy. Secondly, they can be used against powerful shore-based enemy defences. Some countries -- Sweden and Norway for example -- have built excellent coastal shelters for their ships. In those shelters the ships are in no danger from many kinds of Soviet weapon, including some nuclear ones. To discover and put out of action such shelters will be one of *spetsnaz's* most important tasks. Seaborne *spetsnaz* can also be used against bridges, docks, ports and underwater tunnels of the enemy. Even more dangerous may be *spetsnaz* operations against the most expensive and valuable ships -- the aircraft carriers, cruisers, nuclear submarines, floating bases for submarines, ships carrying missiles and nuclear warheads, and against command ships.

In the course of a war many communications satellites will be destroyed and radio links will be broken off through the explosion of nuclear weapons in outer space. In that case an enormous number of messages will have to be transmitted by underground and underwater cable. These cables are a very tempting target for *spetsnaz*. *Spetsnaz* can either destroy or make use of the enemy's underwater cables, passively (i.e. listening in on them) or actively (breaking into the cable and transmitting false messages). In order to be able to do this during a war the naval brigades of *spetsnaz* are busy in peacetime seeking out underwater cables in international waters in many parts of the world.

The presence of Soviet midget submarines has been recorded in recent years in the Baltic, Black, Mediterranean, Tyrrhenian and Caribbean seas. They have been operating in the Atlantic not far from Gibraltar. It is interesting to note that for this 'scientific' work the Soviet Navy used not only the manned submarines of the Argus class but also the automatic unmanned submarines of the Zvuk class.

Unmanned submarines are the weapon of the future, although they are already in use in *spetsnaz* units today. An unmanned submarine can be of very small dimensions, because modern technology makes it possible to reduce

considerably the size and weight of the necessary electronic equipment. Equally, an unmanned submarine does not need a supply of air and can have any number of bulkheads for greater stability and can raise its internal pressure to any level, so that it can operate at any depths. Finally, the loss of such a vessel does not affect people's morale, and therefore greater risks can be taken with it in peace and war. It can penetrate into places where the captain of an ordinary ship would never dare to go. Even the capture of such a submarine by an enemy does not involve such major political consequences as would the seizure of a Soviet manned submarine in the territorial waters of another state. At present, Soviet unmanned automatic submarines and other underwater equipment operate in conjunction with manned surface ships and submarines. It is quite possible that for the foreseeable future these tactics will be continued, because there has to be a man somewhere nearby. Even so, the unmanned automatic submarines make it possible substantially to increase the *spetsnaz* potential. It is perfectly easy for a Soviet ship with a crew to remain innocently in international waters while an unmanned submarine under its control is penetrating into an enemy's territorial waters.

Apart from manned and unmanned submarines *spetsnaz* has for some decades now been paying enormous attention to 'live submarines' -- dolphins. The Soviet Union has an enormous scientific centre on the Black Sea for studying the behaviour of dolphins. Much of the centre's work is wrapped in the thick shroud of official secrecy.

From ancient times the dolphin has delighted man by its quite extraordinary abilities. A dolphin can easily dive to a depth of 300 metres; its hearing range is seventy times that of a human being; its brain is surprisingly well developed and similar to the human brain. Dolphins are very easy to tame and train.

The use of dolphins by *spetsnaz* could widen their operations even further, using them to accompany swimmers in action and warning them of danger; guarding units from an enemy's underwater commandos; hunting for all kinds of objects under water -- enemy submarines, mines, underwater cables and pipelines; and the dolphin could be used to carry out independent acts of terrorism: attacking important targets with an explosive charge attached to it, or destroying enemy personnel with the aid of knives, needles or more complicated weapons attached to its body.

Chapter 10. Battle Training

It was a cold, grey day, with a gusty wind blowing and ragged clouds sweeping across the sky. The deputy chief of the *spetsnaz* department, 17th Army, and I were standing near an old railway bridge. Many years previously they had built a railway line there, but for some reason it had been abandoned half-built. There remained only the bridge across leaden-coloured water. It seemed enormously high up. Around us was a vast emptiness, forest covering enormous spaces, where you were more likely to meet a bear than a

man.

A *spetsnaz* competition was in progress. The lieutenant-colonel and I were umpires. The route being covered by the competitors was many tens of kilometres long. Soldiers, sodden with the rain and red in the face, laden with weapons and equipment, were trying to cover the route in the course of a few days -- running, quick-marching, running again. Their faces were covered with a dirty growth of beard. They carried no food and got their water from the streams and lakes. In addition there were many unpleasant and unforeseen obstacles for them on the way.

At our control point, orange arrows told the soldiers to cross the bridge. In the middle of the bridge another arrow pointed to the handrail at the edge. A soldier lagging a long way behind his group ran onto the bridge. His tiredness kept his head down, so he ran to the middle of the bridge, and then a little further before he came to a sharp halt. He turned back and saw the arrow pointing to the edge. He looked over the rail and saw the next arrow on a marshy island, some way away and overgrown with reeds. It was huge and orange, but only just visible in the distance. The soldier let out a whistle of concern. He clambered onto the rail with all his weapons and equipment, let out a violent curse and jumped. As he dropped, he also tried to curse his fate and *spetsnaz* in good soldier's language, but the cry turned into a long drawn-out howl. He hit the black freezing water with a crash and for a long time did not reappear. Finally his head emerged from the water. It was late autumn and the water was icy cold. But the soldier set off swimming for the distant island.

At our control point, where one after the other the soldiers plunged from the high bridge, there was no means of rescuing any soldier who got into difficulty. And there was no one to rescue anybody either. We officers were there only to observe the men, to make sure each one jumped, and from the very middle of the bridge. The rest did not concern us.

'What if one of them drowns?' I asked the *spetsnaz* officer.

'If he drowns it means he's no good for *spetsnaz*.'

It means he's no good for *spetsnaz*. The sentence expresses the whole philosophy of battle training. The old soldiers pass it on to the young ones who take it as a joke. But they very soon find out that nobody is joking.

Battle training programmes for *spetsnaz* are drawn up in consultation with some of the Soviet Union's leading experts in psychology. They have established that in the past training had been carried out incorrectly, on the principle of moving from the simple to the more difficult. A soldier was first taught to jump from a low level, to pack his parachute, to land properly, and so forth, with the prospect later of learning to make a real parachute jump. But the longer the process of the initial training was drawn out, the longer the soldier was made to wait, the more he began to fear making the jump. Experience acquired in previous wars also shows that reservists, who were trained for only a few days and then thrown into battle, in the majority of cases performed very well. They were sometimes short of training, but they always had enough courage. The reverse was also shown to be true. In the First World War the best Russian regiments stayed in Saint Petersburg. They protected the Emperor and they were trained only to be used in the most critical situations. The longer the war went on, the

less inclined the guards regiments became to fight. The war dragged on, turned into a senseless carve-up, and finally the possibility arose of a quick end to it. To bring the end nearer the Emperor decided to make use of his guards....

The Revolution of 1917 was no revolution. It was simply a revolt by the guards in just one city in a huge empire. The soldiers no longer wanted to fight; they were afraid of war and did not want to die for nothing. Throughout the country there were numerous parties all of which were in favour of ending the war, and only one of them called for peace. The soldiers put their trust in that party. Meanwhile, the regiments that were fighting at the front had suffered enormous losses and their morale was very low, but they had not thought of dispersing to their homes. The front collapsed only when the central authority in Saint Petersburg collapsed.

Lenin's party, which seized power in that vast empire by means of the bayonets of terrified guards in the rear, drew the correct conclusions. Today soldiers are not kept for long in the rear and they don't spend much time in training. It is judged much wiser to throw the young soldier straight into battle, to put those who remain alive into the reserve, reinforce with fresh reservists, and into battle again. The title of 'guards' is then granted only in the course of battle, and only to those units that have suffered heavy losses but kept fighting.

Having absorbed these lessons, the commanders have introduced other reforms into the methods of battle training. These new principles were tried out first of all on *spetsnaz* and gave good results.

The most important feature of the training of a young *spetsnaz* soldier is not to give him time to reflect about what is ahead for him. He should come up against danger and terror and unpleasantness unexpectedly and not have time to be scared. When he overcomes this obstacle, he will be proud of himself, of his own daring, determination and ability to take risks. And subsequently he will not be afraid.

Unpleasant surprises are always awaiting the *spetsnaz* soldier in the first stage of his service, sometimes in the most unlikely situations. He enters a classroom door and they throw a snake round his neck. He is roused in the morning and leaps out of bed to find, suddenly, an enormous grey rat in his boot. On a Saturday evening, when it seems that a hard week is behind him, he is grabbed and thrown into a small prison cell with a snarling dog. The first parachute jump is also dealt with unexpectedly. A quite short course of instruction, then into the sky and straight away out of the hatch. What if he smashes himself up? The answer, as usual: he is no good for *spetsnaz*!

Later the soldier receives his full training, both theoretical and practical, including ways to deal with a snake round his neck or a rat in his boot. But by then the soldier goes to his training classes without any fear of what is to come, because the most frightful things are already behind him.

One of the most important aspects of full battle training is the technique of survival. In the Soviet Union there are plenty of places where there are no people for thousands of square kilometres. Thus the method is to drop a small group of three or four men by parachute in a completely

unfamiliar place where there are no people, no roads and nothing except blinding snow from one horizon to the other or burning sand as far as the eye can see. The group has neither a map nor a compass. Each man has a Kalashnikov automatic, but only one round of ammunition. In addition he has a knife and a spade. The food supply is the minimum, sometimes none at all. The group does not know how long it will have to walk -- a day, five days, a fortnight? The men can use their ammunition as they please. They can kill a deer, an elk or a bear. That would be plenty for the whole group for a long journey. But what if wolves were to attack and the ammunition were finished?

To make the survival exercises more realistic the groups take no radio sets with them, and they cannot transmit distress signals, whatever has happened within the group, until they meet the first people on their way. Often they begin with a parachute drop in the most unpleasant places: on thin ice, in a forest, in mountains. In 1982 three Soviet military parachutists made a jump into the crater of the Avachinsk volcano. First of all they had to get themselves out of the crater. Two other Soviet military parachutists have several times begun their exercises with a landing on the summit of Mount Elbruz (5,642 metres). Having successfully completed the survival route they have done the same thing on the highest mountains in the Soviet Union -- the peaks named after Lenin (7,134 metres) and Communism (7,495 metres).

In the conditions prevailing in Western Europe today different habits and different training methods are necessary. For this part of their training *spetsnaz* soldiers are dressed in black prison jackets and dropped off at night in the centre of a big city. At the same time the local radio and television stations report that a group of especially dangerous criminals have escaped from the local prison. Interestingly, it is forbidden to publish such reports in the press in the Soviet Union but they may be put out by the local radio and television. The population thus gets only small crumbs of information, so that they are scared stiff of criminals about whom all sorts of fantastic stories start circulating.

The 'criminals' are under orders to return to their company. The local police and MVD troops are given the job of finding them. Only the senior officers of the MVD know that it is only an exercise. The middle and lower ranks of the MVD operate as if it were the real thing. The senior officers usually tell their subordinates that the 'criminals' are not armed and they are to report immediately one of them is arrested. There is a problem, though: the police often do not trust the report that the criminal is not armed (he may have stolen a gun at the last moment) and so, contrary to their instructions, they use their guns. Sometimes the arrested soldier may be delivered back to his superior officers in a half-dead state -- he resisted, they say, and we simply had to defend ourselves.

In some cases major exercises are carried out, and then the whole of the police and the MVD troops know that it is just an exercise. Even so, it is a risky business to be in a *spetsnaz* group. The MVD use dogs on exercises, and the dogs do not understand the difference between an exercise and real fighting.

The *spetsnaz* soldier operates on the territory of the enemy. One of his main tasks is, as we have seen, to seek out specially important targets, for

which purpose he has to capture people and extract the necessary information from them by force. That the soldier knows how to extract the information we have no doubt. But how can he understand what his prisoner is saying? *Spetsnaz* officers go through special language training and in addition every *spetsnaz* company has an officer-interpreter who speaks at least two foreign languages fluently. But there is not always an officer to hand in a small group, so every soldier and sergeant questioning a prisoner must have some knowledge of a foreign language. But most *spetsnaz* soldiers serve for only two years and their battle training is so intense that it just is not possible to fit in even a few extra hours.

How is this problem solved? Can a *spetsnaz* soldier understand a prisoner who nods his head under torture and indicates his readiness to talk?

The ordinary *spetsnaz* soldier has a command of fifteen foreign languages and can use them freely. This is how he does it.

Imagine that you have been taken prisoner by a *spetsnaz* group. Your companion has had a hot iron on the palms of his hands and a big nail driven into his head as a demonstration. They look at you questioningly. You nod your head -- you agree to talk. Every *spetsnaz* soldier has a silken phrase-book -- a white silk handkerchief on which there are sixteen rows of different questions and answers. The first sentence in Russian is: 'Keep your mouth shut or I'll kill you.' The sergeant points to this sentence. Next to it is a translation into English, German, French and many other languages. You find the answer you need in your own language and nod your head. Very good. You understand each other. They can free your mouth. The next sentence is: 'If you don't tell the truth you'll be sorry!' You quickly find the equivalent in your own language. All right, all clear. Further down the silk scarf are about a hundred simple sentences, each with translations into fifteen languages -- 'Where?', 'Missile', 'Headquarters', 'Airfield', 'Store', 'Police checkpoint', 'Minefield', 'How is it guarded?', 'Platoon?', 'Company?', 'Battalion?', 'Dogs?', 'Yes', 'No', and so forth. The last sentence is a repetition of the second: 'If you don't tell the truth you'll be sorry!'

It takes only a couple of minutes to teach the stupidest soldier to communicate with the aid of the silken phrase-book. In addition the soldier is taught to say and understand the simplest and most necessary words, like 'forward', 'back', 'there', 'here', 'to the right', 'to the left', 'metres', 'kilometres' and the numbers from one to twenty. If a soldier is not able to learn this no harm is done, because it is all written on the silk scarf, of which there is one for every man in the group.

In the early 1970s Soviet scientists started to develop a very light electronic device for translating in place of the silken phrase-book or to supplement it. The high command's requirements were simple: the device had to weigh not more than 400 grams, had to fit into a satchel and to be the size of a small book or even smaller. It had to have a display on which could appear a word or simple phrase in Russian which would immediately be translated into one of the most widely used languages. The person being questioned would print out his answer which would immediately be translated into Russian. I do not know whether such a device is now in use. But progress in technology will soon permit the creation of something similar. Not only *spetsnaz* but many other organisations in the Soviet Army have displayed interest in the device. However, no device can replace a real

interpreter, and that is why, along with the real interpreters, so many people of different foreign nationalities are to be found in *spetsnaz*.

A Soviet soldier who escaped from Afghanistan told how he had been put into a reconnaissance company from an air-assault brigade. This is a case of not-quite *spetsnaz*. Somebody found out that he spoke one of the local dialects and he was immediately sent to the commanding officer. The officer asked him two questions, the traditional two:

'Do you drink vodka? What about sport?'

'Vodka, yes, sport no.'

He gave completely the wrong answers. But in battle conditions a man speaking the language of the enemy is particularly valued. They take him on in spite of everything, and take very good care of him, because on his ability to speak and understand what is said may depend the life of the group or of many groups. And on the way the groups carry out their mission may depend the lives of thousands and in some cases millions of people. The one drawback to being an interpreter is that interpreters are never forgiven for making a mistake. But the drawback is the same for him as it is for everyone else in the unit.

No soldier should be afraid of fire. Throughout the Soviet Army, in every branch of the forces, very close attention is paid to a soldier's or sailor's psychological readiness to come up against fire. In the Navy old submarines are grounded, and several sailors are shut in a compartment in which a fire is started. In the tank forces men are shut into an old tank and a fire is lit inside or outside and sometimes both at once.

The *spetsnaz* soldier comes up against fire more often than any other soldier. For that reason it is constantly present in his battle training from the first to the last day. At least once a day he sees fire that is clearly threatening his life. He is forced to jump over wide ditches with fires raging in them. He has to race through burning rooms and across burning bridges. He rides a motorcycle between flaming walls. Fire can break out next to him at any moment -- when he is eating or sleeping. When he is making a parachute jump to test the accuracy of his fall a tremendous flame may flare up suddenly beneath him.

The *spetsnaz* soldier is taught to deal with fire and to protect himself and his comrades by every means -- rolling along the ground to stop his clothes burning, smothering the flames with earth, branches or a groundsheet. In learning to deal with fire the most important thing is not so much for him to get to know ways of protecting himself (though this is important) as to make him realise that fire is a constant companion of life which is always at his side.

Another very important element of *spetsnaz* training is to teach a soldier not to be afraid of blood and to be able to kill. This is more important and more difficult for *spetsnaz* than for the infantry, for example. The infantry man kills his enemy mainly at a distance of more than a hundred metres and often at a distance of 300 or 400 metres or more. The infantryman does not see the expression on the face of his enemy. His job is simply to take aim correctly, hold his breath and press the trigger smoothly. The infantryman fires at plywood targets in peacetime, and in wartime at people who look at a distance very much like plywood targets. The

blood which an infantryman sees is mainly the blood of his dead comrade or his own, and it gives rise to anger and a thirst for revenge. After that the infantryman fires at his enemy without feeling any twinges of conscience.

The training of a *spetsnaz* soldier is much more complicated. He often has to kill the enemy at close quarters, looking him straight in the face. He sees blood, but it is not the blood of his comrades; it is often the blood of a completely innocent man. The officers commanding *spetsnaz* have to be sure that every *spetsnaz* soldier will do his duty in a critical situation.

Like fire, blood is a constant attribute of the battle training of a soldier. It used to be thought that a soldier could be accustomed to the sight of blood gradually -- first a little blood and then more day by day. But experts have thrown out this view. The *spetsnaz* soldier's first encounter with blood should be, they argue, quite unexpected and in copious quantities. In the course of his career as a fighting man there will be a whole lot of monstrous things which will spring up in front of him without any warning at all. So he should get used to being unsurprised at anything and afraid of nothing.

A group of young *spetsnaz* soldiers are hauled out of bed at night because of an emergency, and sent in pursuit of a 'spy'. The worse the weather the better. Best of all when there is torrential rain, a gusty wind, mud and slush. Many kilometres of obstacles -- broken-down stairs, holes in walls, ropes across holes and ditches. The platoon of young soldiers are completely out of breath, their hearts beating fast. Their feet slip, their hands are scratched and bruised. Forward! Everyone is bad-tempered -- the officers and especially the men. The soldier can give vent to his anger only by punching some weaker fellow-sufferer in the face and maybe getting a kick in the ribs in reply. The area is dotted with ruined houses, everything is smashed, ripped apart, and there's broken glass everywhere. Everything is wet and slippery, and there are never-ending obstacles with searchlights trained on them. But they don't help: they only hinder, blinding the men as they scramble over. Now they come to a dark cellar, with the doors ripped off the hinges. Everybody down. Along the corridor. Then there's water ahead. The whole group running at full tilt without slowing down rushes straight into some sticky liquid. A blinding light flashes on. It's not water they are in -- it's blood. Blood up to the knees, the waist, the chest. On the walls and the ceiling are chunks of rotten flesh, piles of bleeding entrails. The steps are slippery from slimy bits of brain. Undecided, the young soldiers jam the corridor. Then somebody in the darkness lets a huge dog off its chain. There is only one way out -- through the blood. Only forwards, where there is a wide passageway and a staircase upwards.

Where on earth could they get so much blood? From the slaughter-house, of course. It is not so difficult to make the tank of blood. It can be narrow and not very deep, but it must be twisting and there must be a very low ceiling over it. The building in which the tank of blood is arranged can be quite small, but piles of rotten boards, beams and concrete slabs must be tipped into it. Even in very limited space it is possible to create the impression that you are in an endless labyrinth overflowing with blood. The most important thing is to have plenty of twists and turns, holes, gaps, dead ends and doors. If you don't have enough blood you can simply use animal entrails mixed with blood. The bottom of the tank must not be even:

you must give the learner the possibility of tripping over and going under. But most important is that the first training session should take place with a group of really young soldiers who have joined *spetsnaz* but are still isolated and have had no opportunity of meeting older soldiers and being warned what to expect. And there's something else: the tank of blood must not be the final obstacle that night. The greatest mistake is to drive the men through the tank and then bring the exercise to an end, leaving them to clean themselves up and go to bed. In that case the blood will only appear to them as a terrible dream. Keep driving them on over more and more obstacles.

Exhausting training exercises must be repeated and repeated again, never stopping to rest. Carry on with the exercise throughout the morning, throughout the day. Without food and without drink. In that way the men acquire the habit of not being taken aback by any surprises. Blood on their hands and on their uniforms, blood in their boots -- it all becomes something familiar. On the same day there must also be a lot of gunfire, labyrinths with bones, and dogs, dogs and more dogs. The tank of blood must be remembered by the men as something quite ordinary in a whole series of painful experiences.

In the next training session there is no need to use a lot of blood, but it must be constantly present. The men have to crawl beneath some barbed wire. Why not throw some sheep's innards on to the ground and the wire? Let them crawl over that and not just along the ground. A soldier is firing from his sub-machine-gun on the firing range. Why not surround his firing position with chunks of rotting meat which is in any case no good for eating? A soldier makes a parachute jump to test the accuracy of his drop. Why not put on his landing spot, face down, a big puppet in *spetsnaz* uniform with a torn, twisted parachute spattered with pig's blood? These are all standard tricks in *spetsnaz*, simple and effective. To increase the effect the instructors are constantly creating situations in which the men are obliged to get blood on their hands. For example, a soldier has to overcome an obstacle by scrambling up a wall. When he reaches up to grab the ridge at the top of the wall he finds it slippery and sticky from blood. He has a choice -- either to drop down and break his legs (and maybe his neck) or to hang on tighter with both hands, rest his chin on the filthy sill, shift his grip, pull himself up and jump in through the window. A *spetsnaz* soldier does not fall. He pulls himself up and, with blood all over him, swearing hoarsely, he carries on his way, onwards, ever onwards.

Later in the programme come half-joking exercises such as: catch a pregnant cat, open its belly with a razor blade and count how many kittens it has. This is not such an easy exercise as might appear at first. The soldier has no gloves, the cat scratches and he has no one to help him. As an instrument he is allowed to use only a blunt, broken razor blade or razor, and he can easily cut his own fingers.

The process of familiarising *spetsnaz* men with the sight and the reality of blood is not in the least intended to make them into sadists. It is simply that blood is a liquid with which they are going to have to work in wartime. A *spetsnaz* soldier may not be scared of the red liquid. A surgeon works continually with blood and so does the butcher. What would happen if a surgeon or a butcher were suddenly to be afraid of the sight of blood?

Every Soviet soldier, wherever he may be serving, must be able to run, to shoot accurately, to keep his weapon clean and in good working order, and carry out the orders of his superiors precisely and quickly and without asking unnecessary questions. If one studies the battle training of Soviet troops one notices that there are common standards for all branches of troops operating in any conditions. This gives the impression that training in the Soviet Army is the same whatever the conditions. This is not quite true. Many of the demands placed on officers and men are standard throughout the Army. Nevertheless, each Soviet military district and each group of forces operates in conditions unique to itself. Troops of the Leningrad military district have to operate in very severe northern conditions, and their training takes place in forests, marshes and the *tundra* of an arctic climate. Troops of the Transcaucasian military district have to operate in high mountains, while those of the Carpathian and Ural military districts have to operate in medium-high mountains. Even so, the Carpathian district has a mild European climate, while that of the Ural district is wildly different: harsh, with a very hot summer and a very cold winter.

Every military district and group of forces has a commanding officer, a chief of staff and a head of Intelligence who answer with their heads for the battle-readiness of the troops under their command. But every district and group faces a specific enemy, and its own particular (though absolutely secret) task to perform in the event of war, and its own individual role in the plans of the General Staff.

One reason that training takes place *in situ* is that every Soviet frontier district and group of forces has, as a rule, the same natural conditions as the territories in which it will have to fight. Conditions in Karelia differ very little from those in Norway, Sweden and Finland. If troops from the Carpathian military district cross the frontier, they find themselves in a country of high rugged mountains identical to that in which they are permanently stationed. And, if the Soviet troops in Germany cross the frontier, even if there are small differences of terrain and climate, they are at any rate still in Germany.

Spetsnaz is concentrated at this level of fronts and armies. To make sure that *spetsnaz* training is carried out in conditions as close as possible to those in which the troops will have to operate the *spetsnaz* brigades now have special training centres. For example, the natural conditions in the Baltic military district are very similar to those in Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, northern Germany and France. The mountainous Altai is strikingly similar to Scotland. In the Carpathians there are places very similar to the French Alps. If troops have to be trained for operations in Alaska and Canada, Siberia is ideal for the purpose, while for operating in Australia *spetsnaz* units have to be trained in Kazakhstan. The *spetsnaz* brigades have their own training centres, but a brigade (or any other *spetsnaz* unit) can be ordered at any moment to operate in an unfamiliar training centre belonging to another brigade. For example, during the 'Dvina' manoeuvres *spetsnaz* units from the Leningrad, Moscow and North Caucasus military districts were transferred to Belorussia to operate there in unfamiliar conditions. The difference in conditions was especially great for the units transferred from the northern Caucasus.

These transfers are restricted mainly to troops of the internal

military districts. It is reckoned that troops which are already located in Germany, Czechoslovakia and the Transcaucasian military districts will remain there in any circumstances, and it is better to train them thoroughly for operations in those conditions without wasting effort on training for every kind of condition. 'Universal' training is needed by the troops of the internal districts -- the Siberian, Ural, Volga, Moscow and a few others which in the event of war will be switched to crisis points. Courses are also provided for the professional athletes. Every one of these is continually taking part in contests and travelling round the whole country from Vladivostok to Tashkent and Tbilisi to Archangelsk. Such trips in themselves play a tremendous part in training. The professional athlete becomes psychologically prepared to operate in any climate and any circumstances. Trips abroad, especially trips to those countries in which he will have to operate in the event of war, are of even greater assistance in removing psychological barriers and making the athlete ready for action in any conditions.

Spetsnaz units are often involved in manoeuvres at different levels and with different kinds of participants. Their principal 'enemies' on manoeuvres are the MVD troops, the militia, the frontier troops of the KGB, the government communications network of the KGB and the ordinary units of the armed forces.

In time of war KGB and MVD troops would be expected to operate against national liberation movements within the Soviet Union, of which the most dangerous is perceived to be the Russian movement against the USSR. (In the last war it was the Russians who created the most powerful anti-Communist army -- the ROA). The Ukrainian resistance movement is also considered to be very dangerous. Partisan operations would inevitably break out in the Baltic states and the Caucasus, among others. KGB and MVD troops, which are not controlled by the Ministry of Defence, are equipped with helicopters, naval vessels, tanks, artillery and armoured personnel carriers, and exercises in which they operate against *spetsnaz* are of exceptional value to them. But the heads of the GRU are keen on joint manoeuvres for their own reasons. If *spetsnaz* has years' experience of operating against such powerful opponents as the KGB and MVD, its performance against less powerful opponents can only be enhanced.

In the course of manoeuvres the KGB and the MVD (along with the Soviet military units which have to defend themselves) use against *spetsnaz* the whole gamut of possible means of defence, from total control of radio communication to electronic sensors, from hunter aircraft provided with the latest equipment to sniffer dogs, which are used in enormous numbers.

Apart from operating against real Soviet military targets, *spetsnaz* units go through courses at training centres where the conditions and atmosphere of the areas in which they will be expected to fight are reproduced with great fidelity. Models of Pluto, Pershing and Lance missiles and of Mirage-VI, Jaguar and other nuclear-armed aircraft are used to indicate the 'enemy'. There is also artillery capable of firing nuclear shells, special kinds of vehicles used for transporting missiles, warheads, and so forth.

The *spetsnaz* groups have to overcome many lines of defences, and any

group that is caught by the defenders is subject to treatment that is rough enough to knock out of the men any desire to get caught in the future, either on manoeuvres or in a real battle. The *spetsnaz* soldier constantly has the thought drilled into him that being a prisoner is worse than death. At the same time he is taught that his aims are noble ones. First he is captured on manoeuvres and severely beaten, then he is shown archive film shot in concentration camps in the Second World War (the films are naturally more frightful than what can be perpetrated on manoeuvres), then he is released, but may be seized again and subject to a repeat performance. It is calculated that, in a fairly short time the soldier will develop a very strong negative reaction to the idea of being a prisoner, and the certainty that death -- a noble death, in the cause of *spetsnaz* -- is preferable.

One one occasion following my flight to the West I was present at some large-scale military manoeuvres in which the armies of many Western countries took part. The standard of battle training made a very favourable impression on me. I was particularly impressed by the skilful, I would even say masterly, way the units camouflaged themselves. The battle equipment, the tanks and other vehicles, and the armoured personnel carriers are painted with something that does not reflect the sunlight; the colour is very cleverly chosen; and the camouflaging is painted in such a way that it is difficult to make out the vehicle even at a short distance and its outline mixes in with the background. But every army made one enormous mistake with the camouflaging of some of the vehicles, which had huge white circles and red crosses painted on their sides. I explained to the Western officers that the red and white colours were very easily seen at a distance, and that it would be better to use green paint. I was told that the vehicles with the red cross were intended for transporting the wounded, which I knew perfectly well. That was a good reason, I said, why the crosses should be painted out or made very much smaller. Please be human, I said. You are transporting a wounded man and you must protect him by every means. Then protect him. Hide him. Make sure the Communists can't see him.

The argument continued and I did not win the day. Later, other Western officers tried to explain to me that I was simply ignorant of the international agreement about these things. You are not allowed to fire on a vehicle with a red cross. I agreed that I was ignorant and knew nothing about these agreements. But like me, the Soviet soldier is also unaware of those agreements. Those big red crosses are painted so that the Soviet soldier can see them and not fire on them. But the Soviet soldier only knows that a red cross means something medical. Nobody has ever told him he was not to shoot at a red cross.

I learnt about this strange rule, that red crosses must not be shot at, quite by chance. When I was still a Soviet officer, I was reading a book about Nazi war criminals and amongst the charges made was the assertion that the Nazis had sometimes fired on cars and trains bearing a red cross. I found this very interesting, because I could not understand why such an act was considered a crime. A war was being fought and one side was trying to destroy the other. In what way did trains and cars with red crosses differ from the enemy's other vehicles?

I found the answer to the question quite independently, but not in the

Soviet regulations. Perhaps there is an answer to the question there, but, having served in the Soviet Army for many years and having sat for dozens of examinations at different levels, I have never once come across any reference to the rule that a soldier may not fire at a red cross. At manoeuvres I often asked my commanding officers, some of them very high-ranking, in a very provocative way what would happen if an enemy vehicle suddenly appeared with a red cross on it. I was always answered in a tone of bewilderment. A Soviet officer of very high rank who had graduated from a couple of academies could not understand what difference it made if there were a red cross. Soviet officers have never been told its complete significance. I never bothered to put the question to any of my subordinates.

I graduated from the Military-Diplomatic Academy, and did not perform badly there. In the course of my studies I listened attentively to all the lectures and was always waiting for someone among my teachers (many of them with general's braid and many years' experience in international affairs) to say something about the red cross. But I learnt only that the International Red Cross organisation is located in Geneva, directly opposite the Permanent Representation of the USSR in United Nations agencies, and that the organisation, like any other international organisation, can be used by officers of the Soviet Intelligence services as a cover for their activities.

For whose benefit do the armies of the West paint those huge red crosses on their ambulances? Try painting a red cross on your back and chest, and going into the forest in winter. Do you think the red cross will save you from being attacked by wolves? Of course not. The wolves do not know your laws and do not understand your symbols. So why do you use a symbol the meaning of which the enemy has no idea?

In the last war the Communists did not respect international conventions and treaties, but some of their enemies, with many centuries of culture and excellent traditions, failed equally to respect international laws. Since then the Red Army has used the red cross symbol, painted very small, as a sign to tell its own soldiers where the hospital is. The red cross needs only to be visible to their own men. The Red Army has no faith in the goodwill of the enemy.

International treaties and conventions have never saved anybody from being attacked. The Ribbentrop-Molotov pact is a striking example. It did not protect the Soviet Union. But if Hitler had managed to invade the British Isles the pact would not have protected Germany either. Stalin said quite openly on this point: 'War can turn all agreements of any kind upside down.'¹

¹ *Pravda*, 15 September 1927.

The Soviet leadership and the Soviet diplomatic service adopt a philosophical attitude to all agreements. If one trusts a friend there is no need for a treaty; friends do not need to rely on treaties to call for assistance. If one is weaker than one's enemy a treaty will not be any use anyway. And if one is stronger than one's enemy, what is the point of observing a treaty? International treaties are just an instrument of politics and propaganda. The Soviet leadership and the Soviet Army put no trust in any treaties, believing only in the force that is behind the

treaties.

Thus the enormous red cross on the side of a military vehicle is just a symbol of Western naivete and faith in the force of protocols, paragraphs, signatures and seals. Since Western diplomats have signed these treaties they ought to insist that the Soviet Union, having also signed them, should explain to its soldiers, officers and generals what they contain, and should include in its official regulations special paragraphs forbidding certain acts in war. Only then would there be any sense in painting on the huge red crosses.

The red cross is only one example. One needs constantly to keep in mind what Lenin always emphasised: that a dictatorship relies on force and not on the law. 'The scientific concept of dictatorship means power, limited in no way, by no laws and restrained by absolutely no rules, and relying directly on force.'²

² Lenin, Vol. 25, p. 441.

Spetsnaz is one of the weapons of a dictatorship. Its battle training is imbued with just one idea: to destroy the enemy. It is an ambition which is not subject to any diplomatic, juridical, ethical or moral restraints.

Chapter 11. Behind Enemy Lines: *Spetsnaz* Tactics

Before *spetsnaz* units can begin active operations behind the enemy's lines they have to get there. The Soviet high command has the choice of either sending *spetsnaz* troops behind the enemy's lines before the outbreak of war, or sending them there after war has broken out. In the first case the enemy may discover them, realise that war has already begun and possibly press the buttons to start a nuclear war -- pre-empting the Soviet Union. But if *spetsnaz* troops are sent in after the outbreak of war, it may be too late. The enemy may already have activated its nuclear capability, and then there will be nothing to put out of action in the enemy's rear: the missiles will be on their way to Soviet territory. One potential solution to the dilemma is that the better, smaller part of *spetsnaz* -- the professional athletes -- arrives before all-out war starts, taking extreme measures not to be discovered, while the standard units penetrate behind enemy lines after war has started.

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In every Soviet embassy there are two secret organisations -- the KGB *rezidentura* and the GRU *rezidentura*. The embassy and the KGB *rezidentura* are guarded by officers of the KGB frontier troops, but in cases where the GRU *rezidentura* has a complement of more than ten officers, it has its own internal *spetsnaz* guard. Before the outbreak of a war, in some cases several months previously, the number of *spetsnaz* officers in a Soviet embassy may be substantially increased, to the point where practically all the auxiliary personnel in the embassy, performing the duties of guards, cleaners, radio-operators, cooks and mechanics, will be *spetsnaz* athletes. With them,

as their 'wives', women athletes from *spetsnaz* may turn up in the embassy. Similar changes of staff may take place in the many other Soviet bodies -- the consulate, the commercial representation, the offices of Aeroflot, Intourist, TASS, Novosti and so forth.

The advantages of this arrangement are obvious, but it is not without its dangers. The principal danger lies in the fact that these new terrorist groups are based right in the centre of the country's capital city, uncomfortably close to government offices and surveillance. But within days, possibly within hours, before the outbreak of war they can, with care, make contact with the *spetsnaz* agent network and start a real war in the very centre of the city, using hiding places already prepared.

Part of their support will come from other *spetsnaz* groups which have recently arrived in the country in the guise of tourists, teams of sportsmen and various delegations. And at the very last moment large groups of fighting men may suddenly appear out of Aeroflot planes, ships in port, trains and Soviet long-distance road transport ('Sovtransavto'). Simultaneously there may be a secret landing of *spetsnaz* troops from Soviet submarines and surface vessels, both naval and merchant. (Small fishing vessels make an excellent means of transport for *spetsnaz*. They naturally spend long periods in the coastal waters of foreign states and do not arouse suspicion, so *spetsnaz* groups can spend a long time aboard and can easily return home if they do not get an order to make a landing). At the critical moment, on receipt of a signal, they can make a landing on the coast using aqualungs and small boats. *Spetsnaz* groups arriving by Aeroflot can adopt much the same tactics. In a period of tension, a system of regular watches may be introduced. This means that among the passengers on every plane there will be a group of commandos. Having arrived at their intended airport and not having been given a signal, they can remain aboard the aircraft¹ and go back on the next flight. Next day another group will make the trip, and so on. One day the signal will come, and the group will leave the plane and start fighting right in the country's main airport. Their main task is to capture the airport for the benefit of a fresh wave of *spetsnaz* troops or airborne units (VDV).

¹ An aircraft is considered to be part of the territory of the country to which it belongs, and the pilot's cabin and the interior of the plane are not subject to foreign supervision.

It is a well-known fact that the 'liberation' of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 began with the arrival at Prague airport of Soviet military transport planes with VDV troops on board. The airborne troops did not need parachutes; the planes simply landed at the airport. Before the troops disembarked there was a moment when both the aircraft and their passengers were completely defenceless. Was the Soviet high command not taking a risk? No, because the fact is that by the time the planes landed, Prague airport had already been largely paralysed by a group of 'tourists' who had arrived earlier.

Spetsnaz groups may turn up in the territory of an enemy from the territory of neutral states. Before the outbreak of war or during a war *spetsnaz* groups may penetrate secretly into the territory of neutral states and wait there for an agreed signal or until a previously agreed time. One of the advantages of this is that the enemy does not watch over his

frontiers with neutral countries as carefully as he does over his frontiers with Communist countries. The arrival of a *spetsnaz* group from a neutral state may pass unnoticed both by the enemy and the neutral state.

But what happens if the group is discovered on neutral territory? The answer is simple: the group will go into action in the same way as in enemy territory -- avoid being followed, kill any witnesses, use force and cunning to halt any pursuers. They will make every effort to ensure that nobody from the group gets into the hands of their pursuers and not to leave any evidence about to show that the group belongs to the armed forces of the USSR. If the group should be captured by the authorities of the neutral state, Soviet diplomacy has enormous experience and some well-trying counter-moves. It may admit its mistake, make an official apology and offer compensation for any damage caused; it may declare that the group lost its way and thought it was already in enemy territory; or it may accuse the neutral state of having deliberately seized a group of members of the Soviet armed forces on Soviet territory for provocative purposes, and demand explanations, apologies and compensation, accompanied by open threats.

Experience has shown that this last plan is the most reliable. The reader should not dismiss it lightly. Soviet official publications wrote at the beginning of December 1939 that war was being waged against Finland in order to establish a Communist regime there, and a Communist government of 'people's Finland' had already been formed. Thirty years later Soviet marshals were writing that it was not at all like that: the Soviet Union was simply acting in self-defence. The war against Finland, which was waged from the first to the last day on Finnish territory, is now described as 'repelling Finnish aggression'² and even as 'fulfilling the plan for protecting our frontiers.'³

² Marshal K. A. Meretskov, *Na Sluzhbe narodu (In the Service of the People)*, 1968.

³ Marshal A. M. Vasilevsky, *Delo Vsei gesnie (A Life's Work)*, 1968.

The Soviet Union is always innocent: it only repels perfidious aggressors. On other people's territory.

The principal way of delivering the main body of *spetsnaz* to the enemy's rear after the outbreak of war is to drop them by parachute. In the course of his two years' service every *spetsnaz* soldier makes thirty-five to forty parachute jumps. *Spetsnaz* professionals and officers have much greater experience with parachutes; some have thousands of jumps to their credit.

The parachute is not just a weapon and a form of transport. It also acts as a filter which courageous soldiers will pass through, but weak and cowardly men will not. The Soviet Government spends enormous sums on the development of parachute jumping as a sport. This is the main base from which the airborne troops and *spetsnaz* are built up. On 1 January 1985 the FAI had recorded sixty-three world records in parachute jumping, of which forty-eight are held by Soviet sportsmen (which means the Soviet Army). The Soviet military athlete Yuri Baranov was the first man in the world to exceed 13,000 jumps. Among Soviet women the champion in the number of jumps

is Aleksandra Shvachko -- she has made 8,200 jumps. The parachute psychosis continues.

In peacetime military transport planes are used for making parachute drops. But this is done largely to prevent the fact of the existence of *spetsnaz* from spreading. In wartime military transports would be used for dropping *spetsnaz* groups only in exceptional circumstances. There are two reasons for this. In the first place, the whole fleet of military transport planes would be taken up with transporting the airborne forces (VDV), of which there are an enormous number. Apart from which, military aviation would have other difficult missions to perform, such as the transport of troops within the country from passive, less important sectors to the areas where the main fighting was taking place. Secondly, the majority of military transports are enormous aircraft, built for moving people and equipment on a large scale, which do not suit the purposes of *spetsnaz*. It needs small planes that do not present large targets and carry no more than twenty or thirty people. They must also be able to fly at very low level without much noise. In some cases even smaller aircraft that take eight to ten, or down to three or four parachutists, are needed.

However, the official term 'civil aviation', which is the source of most *spetsnaz* transport in wartime, is a substantial misnomer. The minister for civil aviation bears, quite officially, the rank of air chief marshal in the Air Force. His deputies bear the rank of generals. The whole of Aeroflot's flying personnel have the ranks of officers of the reserve. In the event of war Aeroflot simply merges with the Soviet Air Force, and the reserve officers then become regular officers with the same rank.

It has more than enough small aircraft for the business of transporting and supplying *spetsnaz* units. The best of them are the Yakovlev-42 and the Yakovlev-40, very manoeuvrable, reliable, low-noise planes capable of flying at very low altitudes. They have one very important construction feature -- passengers embark and disembark through a hatch at the bottom and rear of the aircraft. If need be, the hatch cover can be removed altogether, giving the parachutists an exit as on a military transport plane, which makes it possible to drop them in complete safety. Another plane that has great possibilities for *spetsnaz* is the Antonov-72 -- an exact copy of the American YC-14 of which the plans were stolen by GRU spies.

But how can *spetsnaz* parachutists use ordinary civil jet-propelled aircraft, which passengers enter and leave by side doors? The doors cannot be opened in flight. And if they were made to open inwards instead of outwards, it would be exceptionally dangerous for a parachutist to leave the plane, because the force of the current of air would press the man back against the body of the plane. He might be killed either from the force with which he bounced back against the plane, or through interference with the opening of his parachute.

The problem has been solved by a very simple device. The door is arranged to open inwards, and a wide tube made of strong, flexible, synthetic material is allowed to hang out. As he leaves the door the parachutist finds himself in a sort of three-metre long corridor which he slides down so that he comes away from the aircraft when he is slightly to one side and below the fuselage.

Variations on this device were first used on Ilyushin-76 military transport planes. The heavy equipment of the airborne troops was dropped out of the huge rear freight hatch, while at the same time the men were leaving the plane through flexible 'sleeves' at the side. The West has not given this simple but very clever invention its due. Its importance lies not only in the fact that the time taken to drop Soviet parachutists from transport planes has been substantially reduced, with the result that every drop is safer and that forces are much better concentrated on landing. What it also means is that practically *any* jet-propelled civil aircraft can now be used for dropping parachute troops.

The dropping of a *spetsnaz* unit can be carried out at any time of the day or night. Every time has its advantages and its problems. Night-time is the *spetsnaz* soldier's ally, when the appearance of a group of *spetsnaz* deep in the enemy's rear may not be noticed at all. Even if the enemy were aware of the group's arrival, it is never easy to organise a full-scale search at night, especially if the exact landing place is not known and may be somewhere inaccessible where there are forests and hills or mountains with few roads and no troops on the spot. But at night there are likely to be casualties among the parachutists as they land. The same problems of assembly and orientation which face the pursuit troops face the *spetsnaz* unit too.

During the day, obviously, there are fewer accidents on landing; but the landing will be seen. Deliberate daytime landings may sometimes be carried out for the simple reason that the enemy does not expect such brazen behaviour at such a time.

In many cases the drop will be carried out early in the morning while there are still stars in the sky and the sun has not risen. This is a very good time if large numbers of soldiers are being dropped who are expected to go straight into battle and carry out their mission by means of a really sudden attack. In that case the high command does its best to ensure that the groups have as much daylight as possible for active operations on the first, most important day of their mission.

But every *spetsnaz* soldier's favourite time for being dropped is at sunset. The flight is calculated so that the parachutists' drop is carried out in the last minutes before the onset of darkness. The landing then takes place in the twilight when it is still light enough to avoid landing on a church spire or a telegraph pole. In half an hour at the most darkness will conceal the men and they will have the whole night ahead of them to leave the landing area and cover their tracks.

On its own territory *spetsnaz* has a standard military structure⁴: section, platoon, company, battalion, brigade; or section, platoon, company, regiment. This organisation simplifies the control, administration and battle training of *spetsnaz*. But this structure cannot be used on enemy territory.

⁴ See Appendices for precise organisation of *spetsnaz* at different

levels.

The problem is, firstly, that every *spetsnaz* operation is individual and unlike any other; a plan is worked out for each operation, which is unlike any other. Each operation consequently requires forces organised, not in a standard fashion, but adapted to the particular plan.

Secondly, when it is on enemy territory, a *spetsnaz* unit is in direct communication with a major headquarters, at the very least the headquarters of an all-arm or tank army, and orders are received in many cases directly from a high-level HQ. A very long chain of command is simply not needed.

On operations a simple and flexible chain of command is used. The organisational unit on enemy territory is known officially as the reconnaissance group of *spetsnaz* (RGSN). A group is formed before the beginning of an operation and may contain from two to thirty men. It can operate independently or as part of a detachment (ROSN), which consists of between thirty and 300 or more men. The detachment contains groups of various sizes and for various purposes. The names 'detachment' and 'group' are used deliberately, to emphasise the temporary nature of the units. In the course of an operation groups can leave a detachment and join it again, and each group may in turn break up into several smaller groups or, conversely, come together with others into one big group. Several large groups can join up and form a detachment which can at any moment split up again. The whole process is usually planned before the operation begins. For example: the drop may take place in small groups, perhaps fifteen of them altogether. On the second day of the operation (D+1) eight of the groups will join up into one detachment for a joint raid, while the rest operate independently. On D+2 two groups are taken out of the detachment to form the basis of a new detachment and another six groups link up with the second detachment. On D+5 the first detachment splits up into groups and on D+6 the second group splits up, and so on. Before the beginning of the operation each group is informed where and when to meet up with the other groups and what to do in case the rendezvous is not kept.

Having landed in enemy territory *spetsnaz* may go straight into battle. Otherwise, it will hide the equipment it no longer needs -- boats, parachutes, etc -- by either burying them in the ground or sinking them in water. Very often it will then mine the drop area. The mines are laid where the unwanted equipment has been buried. The area is also treated with one of a number of substances which will confuse a dog's sense of smell. After that, the group (of whatever size) will break up into little sub-groups which depart quickly in different directions. A meeting of the sub-groups will take place later at a previously arranged spot or, if this proves problematic, at one of the several alternative places which have been agreed.

The drop area is usually the first place where casualties occur. However good the parachute training is, leg injuries and fractures are a frequent occurrence, and when the drop takes place in an unfamiliar place, in complete darkness, perhaps in fog, over a forest or mountains, they are inevitable. Even built-up areas provide their own hazards. *Spetsnaz* laws are simple and easy to understand. In a case of serious injury the commander

cannot take the wounded man with him; doing so would greatly reduce the group's mobility and might lead to the mission having to be aborted. But the commander cannot, equally, leave the wounded man alone. Consequently a simple and logical decision is taken, to kill the wounded man. *Spetsnaz* has a very humane means of killing its wounded soldiers -- a powerful drug known to the men as 'Blessed Death'. An injection with the drug stops the pain and quickly produces a state of blissful drowsiness. In the event that a commander decides, out of misguided humanity, to take the wounded man with him, and it looks as if this might jeopardise the mission, the deputy commander is under orders to dispatch both the wounded man and the commander. The commander is removed without recourse to drugs. It is recommended that he be seized from behind with a hand over his mouth and a knife blow to his throat. If the deputy does not deal with his commander in this situation, then not just the commander and his deputy, but the entire group may be regarded as traitors, with all the inevitable consequences.

As they leave the area of the drop the groups and sub-groups cover their tracks, using methods that have been well known for centuries: walking through water and over stones, walking in each other's footsteps, and so forth. The groups lay more mines behind them and spread more powder against dogs.

After leaving the drop zone and having made sure that they are not being followed, the commander gives orders for the organisation of a base and a reserve base, safe places concealed from the view of outsiders. Long before a war GRU officers, working abroad in the guise of diplomats, journalists, consuls and other representatives of the USSR, choose places suitable for establishing bases. The majority of GRU officers have been at some time very closely familiar with *spetsnaz*, or are themselves *spetsnaz* officers, or have worked in the Intelligence Directorate of a district or group of forces. They know what is needed for a base to be convenient and safe.

Bases can be of all sorts and kinds. The ideal base would be a hiding place beneath ground level, with a drainage system, running water, a supply of food, a radio set to pick up the local news and some simple means of transport. I have already described how *spetsnaz* agents, recruited locally, can establish the more elaborate bases which are used by the professional groups of athletes carrying out exceptionally important tasks. In the majority of cases the base will be somewhere like a cave, or an abandoned quarry, or an underground passage in a town, or just a secluded place among the undergrowth in a dense forest.

A *spetsnaz* group can leave at the base all the heavy equipment it does not need immediately. The existence of even the most rudimentary base enables it to operate without having to carry much with it in the way of equipment or supplies. The approaches to the base are always guarded and the access paths mined -- the closest with ordinary mines and the more distant ones with warning mines which explode with much noise and a bright flash, alerting any people in the base of approaching danger.

When the group moves off to carry out its task, a few men normally remain behind to guard the base, choosing convenient observation points from which to keep an eye on it. In the event of its being discovered the guard leaves the location quietly and makes for the reserve base, leaving warnings of the danger to the rest of the group in an agreed place. The main group returning from its mission will visit the reserve base first and only then

go to the main base. There is a double safeguard here: the group may meet the guards in the reserve base and so avoid falling into a trap; otherwise the group will see the warning signals left by the guards. The craters from exploded mines around the base may also serve as warnings of danger. If the worst comes to the worst, the guards can give warning of danger by radio.

A *spetsnaz* group may also have a moving base. Then it can operate at night, unhampered by heavy burdens, while the guards cart all the group's heavy equipment along by other routes. Each morning the group meets up with its mobile base. The group replenishes its supplies and then remains behind to rest or to set off on another operation, while the base moves to another place. The most unexpected places can be used by the mobile bases. I once saw a base which looked simply like a pile of grass that had been thrown down in the middle of a field. The soldiers' packs and equipment had been very carefully disguised, and the men guarding the base were a kilometre away, also in a field and camouflaged with grass. All around there were lots of convenient ravines overgrown with young trees and bushes. That was where the KGB and MVD units were looking for the *spetsnaz* base, and where the helicopters were circling overhead. It did not occur to anybody that a base could be right in the middle of an open field.

In some cases a *spetsnaz* group may capture a vehicle for transporting its mobile base. It might be an armoured personnel carrier, a truck or an ordinary car. And if a group is engaged in very intensive fighting involving frequent changes of location, then no base is organised. In the event of its being pursued the group can abandon all its heavy equipment, having first removed the safety pin from the remaining mines.

In order to destroy a target it has first to be located. In the overwhelming majority of cases a *spetsnaz* operation includes the search for the target. This is understandable, since targets whose location is known and which are not movable can be destroyed easily and quickly with missiles and aircraft. But a great number of targets in present-day fighting are mobile. On the eve of a war or just after it has broken out, government offices are moved out of a country's capital for secret command posts whose location is known to very few people. New communications centres and lines are brought into operation. Aircraft are removed from stationary aerodromes and dispersed to airfields established in places unknown to the enemy. Many missile installations are moved to new concealed, and carefully guarded, locations. Troops and headquarters are also relocated.

In these circumstances the search for targets acquires paramount significance for *spetsnaz*. To be able to find a target of special importance, to identify it, and to know how to distinguish real targets from false ones, become the most important tasks for *spetsnaz*, more important even than the destruction of the targets. Once a target has been discovered it can be destroyed by other forces -- missiles, aircraft, marines, airborne troops. But a target that has not been discovered cannot be destroyed by anyone.

Because the business of identifying targets is the most important task for *spetsnaz* it cannot be a separate and independent organisation. It can carry out this task only if it relies on all the resources of the GRU, and only if it can make use of information obtained by agents and from all the

various kinds of *razvedka* -- satellite, aircraft, naval, electronic, and so forth.

Every form of *razvedka* has its good and its bad side. A complete picture of what is happening can be obtained only by making use of all forms of *razvedka* in close interaction one with another, compensating for the weaknesses of some forms with the advantages of the others.

Every officer in charge of *razvedka* uses *spetsnaz* only where its use can give the very best result. When he sends a *spetsnaz* group behind enemy lines the officer in command already knows a good deal about the enemy from other sources. He knows exactly what the unit is to look for and roughly where it has to look. The information obtained by *spetsnaz* groups (sometimes only fragmentary and uncertain) can in turn be of exceptional value to the other forms of *razvedka* and be the starting point for more attentive work in those areas by agents and other services.

Only with a union of all forces and resources is it possible to reveal the plans and intentions of the enemy, the strength and organisation of his forces, and to inflict defeat on him.

But let us return to the commander of the *spetsnaz* group who, despatching it to a particular area, already knows a good deal about the area, the specially important targets that may be found there, and even their approximate location. This information (or as much of it as concerns him) is passed on to the commander of the group and his deputy. The group has landed safely, covered its tracks, established a base and started its search. How should it set about it?

There are several tried and tested methods. Each target of special importance must have a communications centre and lines of communication leading to it. The group may include experts at radio *razvedka*. Let us not forget that *spetsnaz* is the 3rd department and radio *razvedka* the 5th department of the same Directorate (the Second) at the headquarters of every front, fleet, group of forces and military district. *Spetsnaz* and radio *razvedka* are very closely connected and often help each other, even to the point of having radio *razvedka* experts in *spetsnaz* groups. By monitoring radio transmissions in the area of important targets it is possible to determine quite accurately their whereabouts.

But it is also possible to discover the target without the aid of radio *razvedka*. The direction of receiving and transmitting aerials of tropospheric, radio-relay and other communication lines provides a lot of information about the location of the terminal points on lines of communication. This in turn leads us right up to the command posts and other targets of great importance.

Sometimes before a search begins the commander of the group will decide by the map which, in his opinion, are the most likely locations for particular targets. His group will examine those areas first of all.

If the targets are moved, then the roads, bridges, tunnels and mountain passes where they may be seen are put under observation.

The search for a particular target can be carried out simultaneously by several groups. In that case the officer in charge divides the territory being searched into squares in each of which one group operates.

Each group searching a square usually spreads out into a long line with tens or even hundreds of metres between each man. Each man moves by the compass, trying to keep in sight of his neighbours. They advance in complete silence. They choose suitable observation points and carefully examine the

areas ahead of them, and if they discover nothing they move on to another hiding place. In this way relatively small groups of well trained soldiers can keep quite extensive areas under observation. Unlike *razvedka* conducted from outer space or the air, *spetsnaz* can get right up to targets and view them, not from above, but from the ground. Experience shows that it is much more difficult to deceive a *spetsnaz* man with false targets than it is a man operating an electronic intelligence station or an expert at interpreting pictures taken from the air or from space.

Spetsnaz groups have recently begun to make ever greater use of electronic apparatus for seeking their targets. They now carry portable radar, infra-red and acoustic equipment, night-vision sights, and so forth. But whatever new electronic devices are invented, they will never replace the simplest and most reliable method of establishing the location of important targets: questioning a prisoner.

It may be claimed that not every prisoner will agree to answer the questions put to him, or that some prisoners will answer the questions put by *spetsnaz* but give wrong answers and lead their interrogators astray. To which my reply is categorical. Everybody answers questions from *spetsnaz*. There are no exceptions. I have been asked how long a very strong person can hold out against questioning by *spetsnaz*, without replying to questions. The answer is: one second. If you don't believe this, just try the following experiment. Get one of your friends who considers himself a strong character to write on a piece of paper a number known only to himself and seal the paper in an envelope. Then tie your friend to a post or a tree and ask him what number he wrote on the paper. If he refuses to answer, file his teeth down with a big file and count the time. Having received the answer, open the envelope and check that he has given you the number written on the paper. I guarantee the answer will be correct.

If you perform such an experiment, you will have an idea of one of *spetsnaz*'s milder ways of questioning people. But there are more effective and reliable ways of making a person talk. Everyone who falls into the hands of *spetsnaz* knows he is going to be killed. But people exert themselves to give correct and precise answers. They are not fighting for their lives but for an easy death. Prisoners are generally interrogated in twos or larger groups. If one seems to know less than the others, he can be used for demonstration purposes to encourage them to talk. If the questioning is being done in a town the prisoner may have a heated iron placed on his body, or have his ears pierced with an electric drill, or be cut to pieces with an electric saw. A man's fingers are particularly sensitive. If the finger of a man being questioned is simply bent back and the end of the finger squashed as it is bent, the pain is unendurable. One method considered very effective is a form of torture known as 'the bicycle'. A man is bound and laid on his back. Pieces of paper (or cotton wool or rags) soaked in spirit, eau-de-cologne, etc., are stuck between his fingers and set alight.

Spetsnaz has a special passion for the sexual organs. If the conditions permit, a very old and simple method is used to demonstrate the power of *spetsnaz*. The captors drive a big wedge into the trunk of a tree, then force the victim's sexual organs into the opening and knock out the wedge. They then proceed to question the other prisoners. At the same time, in order to make them more talkative, the principal *spetsnaz* weapon -- the little infantryman's spade -- is used. As *spetsnaz* asks its questions the blade of the spade is used to cut off ears and fingers, to hit the victims in the

liver and perform a whole catalogue of unpleasant operations on the person under interrogation.

One very simple way of making a man talk is known as the 'swallow', well known in Soviet concentration camps. It does not require any weapons or other instruments, and if it is used with discretion it does not leave any traces on the victim's body. He is laid face down on the ground and his legs are bent back to bring his heels as close as possible to the back of his neck. The 'swallow' generally produces a straight answer in a matter of seconds.

Of course, every method has its shortcomings. That is why a commander uses several methods at the same time. The 'swallow' is not usually employed in the early stages of an operation. Immediately after a landing, the commander of a *spetsnaz* group tries to use one really blood-thirsty device out of his arsenal: cutting a man's lips with a razor, or breaking his neck by twisting his head round. These methods are used even when a prisoner obviously has no information, the aim being to prevent any possibility of any of the men in the group going over to the enemy. Everyone, including those who have not taken part in the torture, knows that after this he has no choice: he is bound to his group by a bloody understanding and must either come out on top or die with his group. In case of surrender he may have to suffer the same torture as his friends have just used.

In recent years the KGB, GRU and *spetsnaz* have had the benefit of an enormous training ground in which to try out the effectiveness of their methods of questioning: Afghanistan. The information received from there describes things which greatly exceed in skill and inventiveness anything I have described here. I am quite deliberately not quoting here interrogation methods used by the Soviet forces, including *spetsnaz*, in Afghanistan, which have been reported by thoroughly reliable sources. Western journalists have access to that material and to living witnesses.

Once it has obtained the information it needs about the targets of interest to it, the *spetsnaz* group checks the facts and then kills the prisoners. It should be particularly noted that those who have told the truth do have an easy death. They may be shot, hanged, have their throats cut or be drowned. *Spetsnaz* does not torture anybody for the sake of torture. You come across practically no sadists in *spetsnaz*. If they find one they quickly get rid of him. Both the easier and the tougher forms of questioning in *spetsnaz* are an unavoidable evil that the fighting men have to accept. They use these methods, not out of a love of torturing people, but as the simplest and most reliable way of obtaining information essential to their purpose.

Having discovered the target and reported on it to their command, *spetsnaz* will in most cases leave the target area as quickly as possible. Very soon afterwards, the target will come under attack by missiles, aircraft or other weapons. In a number of cases, however, the *spetsnaz* group will destroy the target it has discovered itself. They are often given the mission in that form: 'Find and destroy'. But there are also situations when the task is given as 'Find and report', and the group commander takes an independent decision about destroying the target. He may do so when, having found the target, he discovers suddenly that he cannot report to his

superior officers about it; and he may also do so when he comes across a missile ready for firing.

Robbed of the chance or the time to transmit a report, the commander has to take all possible steps to destroy the target, including ordering a suicide attack on it. Readiness to carry out a suicide mission is maintained in *spetsnaz* by many methods. One of them is to expose obvious sadists and have them transferred immediately to other branches of the forces, because experience shows that in the overwhelming majority of cases the sadist is a coward, incapable of sacrificing himself.

The actual destruction of targets is perhaps the most ordinary and prosaic part of the entire operation. VIPs are usually killed as they are being transported from one place to another, when they are at their most vulnerable. The weapons include snipers' rifles, grenade-launchers or mines laid in the roadway. If a VIP enjoys travelling by helicopter it is a very simple matter. For one thing, a single helicopter is a better target than a number of cars, when the terrorists do not know exactly which car their victim is travelling in. Secondly, even minor damage to a helicopter will bring it down and almost certainly kill the VIP.

Missiles and aircraft are also attacked with snipers' rifles and grenade-launchers of various kinds. One bullet hole in a missile or an aircraft can put it out of action. If he cannot hit his target from a distance the commander of the group will attack, usually from two sides. His deputy will attack with one group of men from one side, trying to make as much noise and gunfire as possible, while the other group led by the commander will move, noiselessly, as close to the target as it can. It is obvious that an attack by a small *spetsnaz* group on a well defended target is suicide. But *spetsnaz* will do it. The fact is that even an unsuccessful attack on a missile ready for firing will force the enemy to re-check the whole missile and all its supporting equipment for faults. This may delay the firing for valuable hours, which in a nuclear war might be long enough to alter the course of the conflict.

Chapter 12. Control and Combined Operations

If we describe the modern infantryman in battle and leave it at that, then, however accurate the description, the picture will be incomplete. The modern infantryman should never just be described independently, because he never operates independently. He operates in the closest co-operation with tanks; his way forward is laid by sappers; the artillery and air force work in his interests; he may be helped in his fighting by helicopter gunships; ahead of him there are reconnaissance and parachute units; and behind him is an enormous organisation to support and service him, from supplying ammunition to evacuating the wounded quickly.

To understand the strength of *spetsnaz* one has to remember that *spetsnaz* is primarily reconnaissance, forces which gather and transmit information to their commanders to which their commanders immediately react. The strength of those reconnaissance forces lies in the fact that they have behind them the whole of the nuclear might of the USSR. It may be that before the appearance of *spetsnaz* on enemy territory, a nuclear blow will

already have been made, and despite the attendant dangers, this greatly improves the position of the fighting groups, because the enemy is clearly not going to bother with them. In other circumstances the groups will appear on enemy territory and obtain information required by the Soviet command or amplify it, enabling an immediate nuclear strike to follow. A nuclear strike close to where a *spetsnaz* group is operating is theoretically regarded as the salvation of the group. When there are ruins and fires all round, a state of panic and the usual links and standards have broken down, a group can operate almost openly without any fear of capture.

Similarly, Soviet command may choose to deploy other weapons before *spetsnaz* begins operations or immediately after a group makes its landing: chemical weapons, air attacks or bombardment of the coastline with naval artillery. There is a co-operative principle at work here. Such actions will give the *spetsnaz* groups enormous moral and physical support. And the reverse is also true -- the operations of a group in a particular area and the information it provides will make the strike by Soviet forces more accurate and effective.

In the course of a war direct co-operation is the most dependable form of co-operation. For example, the military commander of a front has learnt through his network of agents (the second department of the 2nd Directorate at front headquarters) or from other sources that there is in a certain area a very important but mobile target which keeps changing its position. He appoints one of his air force divisions to destroy the target. A *spetsnaz* group (or groups) is appointed to direct the division to the target. The liaison between the groups and the air force division is better not conducted through the front headquarters, but directly. The air division commander is told very briefly what the groups are capable of, and they are then handed over to his command. They are dropped behind enemy lines and, while they are carrying out the operation, they maintain direct contact with their divisional headquarters. After the strike on the target the *spetsnaz* group -- if it has survived -- returns immediately to the direct control of the front headquarters, to remain there until it needs to be put under the command of some other force as decided by the front commander.

Direct co-operation is a cornerstone of Soviet strategy and practised widely on manoeuvres, especially at the strategic level¹, when *spetsnaz* groups from regiments of professional athletes are subordinated to commanders of, for example, the strategic missile troops or the strategic (long-range) aviation.

¹ See Appendix D for the organisation of *spetsnaz* at strategic level.

For the main principle governing Soviet strategy is the concentration of colossal forces against the enemy's most vulnerable spot. Soviet troops will strike a super-powerful, sudden blow and then force their way rapidly ahead. In this situation, or immediately before it, a mass drop of *spetsnaz* units will be carried out ahead of and on the flanks of the advancing force, or in places that have to be neutralised for the success of the operation on the main line of advance.

Spetsnaz units at army level², on the other hand, are dropped in the

areas of operations of their own armies at a depth of 100 to 500 kilometres; and *spetsnaz* units under the command of the fronts³ are dropped in the area of operations of their fronts at a depth of between 500 and 1000 kilometres.

² See Appendix A.

³ See Appendix B.

The headquarters to which the group is subordinated tries not to interfere in the operations of the *spetsnaz* group, reckoning that the commander on the spot can see and understand the situation better than can people at headquarters far from where the events are taking place. The headquarters will intervene if it becomes necessary to redirect it to attack a more important target or if a strike is to take place where it is located. But a warning may not be given if the group is not going to have time to get away from the strike area, since all such warnings carry the risk of revealing Soviet intentions to the enemy.

Co-operation between different groups of *spetsnaz* is carried out by means of a distribution of territories for operations by different groups, so that simultaneous blows can be struck in different areas if need be. Co-operation can also be carried out by forward headquarters at battalion, regiment and brigade level, dropped behind the lines to co-ordinate major *spetsnaz* forces in an area. Because *spetsnaz* organisation is so flexible, a group which has landed by chance in another group's operational area can quickly be brought under the latter's command by an order from a superior headquarters.

In the course of a war other Soviet units apart from *spetsnaz* will be operating in enemy territory:

Deep reconnaissance companies from the reconnaissance battalions of the motor-rifle and tank divisions. Both in their function and the tactics they adopt, these companies are practically indistinguishable from regular *spetsnaz*. The difference lies in the fact that these companies do not use parachutes but penetrate behind the enemy's lines in helicopters, jeeps and armoured reconnaissance vehicles. Deep reconnaissance units do not usually co-operate with *spetsnaz*. But their operations, up to 100 kilometres behind the front line, make it possible to concentrate *spetsnaz* activity deeper in the enemy's rear without having to divert it to operations in the zone nearer the front.

Air-assault brigades at front level operate independently, but in some cases *spetsnaz* units may direct the combat helicopters to their targets. It is sometimes possible to have joint operations conducted by men dropped from helicopters and to use helicopters from an air-assault brigade for evacuating the wounded and prisoners.

Airborne divisions operate in accordance with the plans of the commander-in-chief. If difficulties arise with the delivery of supplies to their units, they switch to partisan combat tactics. Co-operation between airborne divisions and *spetsnaz* units is not normally organised, although large-scale drops in the enemy's rear create a favourable situation for

operations by all *spetsnaz* units.

Naval infantry are commanded by the same commander as naval *spetsnaz*: every fleet commander has one brigade of the latter and a brigade (or regiment) of infantry. Consequently these two formations, both intended for operations in the enemy's rear, co-operate very closely. Normally when the naval infantry makes a landing on an enemy coastline, their operation is preceded by, or accompanied by, *spetsnaz* operations in the same area. Groups of naval *spetsnaz* can, of course, operate independently of the naval infantry if they need to, especially in cases where the operations are expected to be in remote areas requiring special skills of survival or concealment.

There are two specific sets of circumstances in which superior headquarters organises direct co-operation between all units operating in the enemy rear. The first is when a combined attack offers the only possibility of destroying or capturing the target, and the second is when Soviet units in the enemy rear have suffered substantial losses and the Soviet command decides to make up improvised groups out of the remnants of the ragged units that are left.

In the course of an advance *spetsnaz* groups, as might be expected, co-operate very closely with the forward detachments.

A Soviet advance -- a sudden break through the defences of the enemy in several places and the rapid forward movement of masses of troops, supported by an equal mass of aircraft and helicopters -- is always co-ordinated with a simultaneous strike in the rear of the enemy by *spetsnaz* forces, airborne troops and naval infantry.

In other armies different criteria are applied to measure a commander's success -- for example, what percentage of the enemy's forces have been destroyed by his troops. In the Soviet Army this is of secondary importance, and may be of no importance at all, because a commander's value is judged by one criterion only: the speed with which his troops advance.

To take the speed of advance as the sole measure of a commander's abilities is not so stupid as it might seem at first glance. As a guiding principle it forces all commanders to seek, find and exploit the weakest spots in the enemy's defences. It obliges the commander to turn the enemy's flank and to avoid getting caught up in unnecessary skirmishes. It also makes commanders make use of theoretically impassable areas to get to the rear of the enemy, instead of battering at his defences.

To find the enemy's weak spots a commander will send reconnaissance groups ahead, and forward detachments which he has assembled for the duration of the advance. Every commander of a regiment, division, army and, in some cases, of a front will form his own forward detachment. In a regiment the detachment normally includes a motor-rifle company with a tank platoon (or a tank company with a motor-rifle platoon); a battery of self-propelled howitzers; an anti-aircraft platoon; and an anti-tank platoon and sapper and chemical warfare units. In a division it will consist of a motor-rifle or tank battalion, with a tank or motor-rifle company as appropriate; an artillery battalion; anti-aircraft and anti-tank batteries; and a company of sappers and some support units. In an army the scale is

correspondingly greater: two or three motor-rifle battalions; one or two tank battalions; two or three artillery battalions, a battalion of multi-barrelled rocket launchers; a few anti-aircraft batteries; an anti-tank battalion; and sappers and chemical warfare troops. Where a front makes up its own forward detachment it will consist of several regiments, most of them tank regiments. The success of each general (i.e. the speed at which he advances) is determined by the speed of his very best units. In practice this means that it is determined by the operations of the forward detachment which he sends into battle. Thus every general assembles his best units for that crucial detachment, puts his most determined officers in command, and puts at their disposal a large slice of his reinforcements. All this makes the forward detachment into a concentration of the strength of the main forces.

It often happens that very high-ranking generals are put in command of relatively small detachments. For example, the forward detachment of the 3rd Guards Tank Army in the Prague operation was commanded by General I. G. Ziberov, who was deputy chief of staff. (The detachment consisted of the 69th mechanised brigade, the 16th self-propelled artillery brigade, the 50th motorcycle regiment, and the 253rd independent penal company).

Every forward detachment is certainly very vulnerable. Let us imagine what the first day of a war in Europe would be like, when the main concentration of Soviet troops has succeeded in some places in making very small breaches in the defences of the forces of the Western powers. Taking advantage of these breaches, and of any other opportunities offered -- blunders by the enemy, unoccupied sectors and the like -- about a hundred forward detachments of regiments, about twenty-five more powerful forward detachments of divisions, and about eight even more powerful forward detachments from armies have penetrated into the rear of the NATO forces. None of them has got involved in the fighting. They are not in the least concerned about their rear or their flanks. They are simply racing ahead without looking back.

This is very similar to the Vistula-Oder operation of 1945, on the eve of which Marshal G. K. Zhukov assembled all sixty-seven commanders of the forward detachments and demanded of each one: 100 kilometres forward progress on the first day of the operation. A hundred kilometres, irrespective of how the main forces were operating, and irrespective of whether the main forces succeeded in breaking through the enemy's defences. Every commander who advanced a hundred kilometres on the first day or averaged seventy kilometres a day for the first four days would receive the highest award -- the Gold Star of a Hero of the Soviet Union. Everybody in the detachment would receive a decoration, and all the men undergoing punishment (every forward detachment has on its strength anything from a company to a battalion's worth of such men riding on the outside of the tanks) would have their offences struck out.

Say what you like about the lack of initiative in Soviet soldiers and officers. Just imagine giving men from a penal battalion such a task. If you succeed in not getting involved in the fighting, and if you manage to outflank the enemy and keep moving, we will strike out all your offences. Get involved in fighting and you will not only shed your blood, you will die a criminal too.

Operations by Soviet forward detachments are not restrained by any limitations. The operations of forward detachments must be independent and

not restricted by the dividing lines,' the Soviet Military Encyclopaedia declares. The fact that the forward detachments may be cut off from the main force should not deter them. For example, on the advance in Manchuria in 1945 the 6th Guards Tank Army advanced rapidly towards the ocean, having crossed the desert, the apparently impregnable Khingan mountain range and the rice fields, and covering 810 kilometres in eleven days. But ahead of it were forward detachments, operating continually, which had rushed 150 to 200 kilometres ahead of the main force. When the officer in command of the front learnt of this spurt ahead (by quite unprotected detachments, which really had not a single support vehicle with them), he did not order the detachments to slow down; on the contrary, he ordered them to increase their speed still further, and not to worry about the distance separating them, however great it was. The more the forward detachments were separated from the main force, the better. The more unsuspected and strange the appearance of Soviet troops seems to the enemy, the greater the panic and the more successful the operations of both the forward detachments and the main Soviet troops.

Forward detachments were of enormous importance in the last war. The speed at which our troops advanced reached at times eighty to a hundred kilometres a day. Such a speed of advance in operations on such an enormous scale causes surprise even today. But it must always be remembered that this terrible rate of advance was to a great extent made possible by the operations of the forward detachments. These are the words of Army-General I.I. Gusev, the same general who from January to April 1945, from the Vistula to Berlin itself, commanded the forward detachment of the 11th Guards Tank Corps and the whole of the 1st Guards Tank Army.

In the last war the forward detachments pierced the enemy's defences with dozens of spearheads at the same time, and the main body of troops followed in their tracks. The forward detachments then destroyed in the enemy's rear only targets that were easy to destroy, and in many cases moved forward quickly enough to capture bridges before they were blown up. The reason the enemy had not blown them up was because his main forces were still wholly engaged against the main forces of the Red Army.

The role played by forward detachments has greatly increased in modern warfare. All Soviet military exercises are aimed at improving the operations of forward detachments. There are two very good reasons why the role of the forward detachments has grown in importance. The first is, predictably, that war has acquired a nuclear dimension. Nuclear weapons (and other modern means of fighting) need to be discovered and destroyed at the earliest possible opportunity. And the more Soviet troops there are on enemy territories, the less likelihood there is of their being destroyed by nuclear weapons. It will always be difficult for the enemy to make a nuclear strike against his own rear where not only are his own forces operating, and which are inhabited but where a strike would also be against his own civilian population.

A forward detachment, rushing far ahead and seeking out and destroying missile batteries, airfields, headquarters and communication lines resembles *spetsnaz* both in character and in spirit. It usually has no transport vehicles at all. It carries only what can be found room for in the tanks and armoured transporters, and its operations may last only a short time, until the fuel in the tanks gives out. All the same, the daring and dashing actions of the detachments will break up the enemy's defences, producing

chaos and panic in his rear, and creating conditions in which the main force can operate with far greater chances of success.

In principle *spetsnaz* does exactly the same. The difference is that *spetsnaz* groups have greater opportunities for discovering important targets, whereas forward detachments have greater opportunities than *spetsnaz* for destroying them. Which is why the forward detachment of each regiment is closely linked up with the regiment's reconnaissance company secretly operating deep inside the enemy's defences. Similarly, the forward detachments of divisions are linked directly with divisional reconnaissance battalions, receiving a great deal of information from them and, by their swift reactions, creating better operating conditions for the reconnaissance battalions.

The forward detachment of an army, usually led by the deputy army commander, will be operating at the same time as the army's *spetsnaz* groups who will have been dropped 100 to 500 kilometres ahead. This means that the forward detachment may find itself in the same operational area as the army's *spetsnaz* groups as early as forty-eight hours after the start of the operation. At that point the deputy army commander will establish direct contact with the *spetsnaz* groups, receiving information from them, sometimes redirecting groups to more important targets and areas, helping the groups and receiving help from them. The *spetsnaz* group may, for example, capture a bridge and hold it for a very short time. The forward detachment simply has to be able to move fast enough to get to the bridge and take over with some of its men. The *spetsnaz* group will stay at the bridge, while the forward detachment runs ahead, and then, after the main body of Soviet forces has arrived at the bridge the *spetsnaz* group will again, after briefing, be dropped by parachute far ahead.

Sometimes *spetsnaz* at the front level will operate in the interests of the army's forward detachments, in which case the army's own *spetsnaz* will turn its attention to the most successful forward detachments of the army's divisions.

Forward detachments are a very powerful weapon in the hands of the Soviet commanders, who have great experience in deploying them. They are in reality the best units of the Soviet Army and in the course of an advance will operate not only in a similar way to *spetsnaz*, but in very close collaboration with it too. The success of operations by *spetsnaz* groups in strategic warfare depends ultimately on the skill and fighting ability of dozens of forward detachments which carry out lightning operations to overturn the enemy's plans and frustrate his attempts to locate and destroy the *spetsnaz* groups.

Chapter 13. *Spetsnaz* and Deception

Secrecy and disinformation are the most effective weapons in the hands of the Soviet Army and the whole Communist system. With the aim of protecting military secrets and of disinforming the enemy a Chief Directorate of Strategic Camouflage (GUSM) was set up within the Soviet General Staff in the 1960s. The Russian term for 'camouflage' -- *maskirovka* -- is, like the word *razvedka*, impossible to translate directly. *Maskirovka*

means everything relating to the preservation of secrets and to giving the enemy a false idea of the plans and intentions of the Soviet high command. *Maskirovka* has a broader meaning than 'deception' and 'camouflage' taken together.

The GUSM and the GRU use different methods in their work but operate on the same battlefield. The demands made of the officers of both organisations are more or less identical. The most important of these demands are: to be able to speak foreign languages fluently; and to know the enemy. It was no coincidence that when the GUSM was set up many senior officers and generals of the GRU were transferred to it. General Moshe Milshtein was one of them, and he had been one of the most successful heads the GRU had had; he spent practically the whole of his career in the West as an illegal¹. Milshtein speaks English, French and German fluently, and possibly other languages as well. He is the author of a secret textbook for GRU officers entitled *An Honourable Service*. I frequently attended lectures given by him about operations by Soviet 'illegals' and the theory upon which the practice of disinformation is based. But even the briefest study of the writings of this general in Soviet military journals, in the *Military-Historical Journal* (VIZ) for example, reveals that he is one of the outstanding Soviet experts in the field of espionage and disinformation.

¹ See Viktor Suvorov, *Soviet Military Intelligence* (London, 1984).

The GUSM is vast. It is continually gathering a colossal number of facts on three key subjects:

1. What the West knows about us.
2. What the West shows us it does not know.
3. What the West is trying to find out.

The GUSM has long-term plans covering what must be concealed and what must have attention drawn to it in the Soviet Army and armaments industry. The experts of the GUSM are constantly fabricating material so that the enemy should draw the wrong conclusions from the authentic information in his possession.

The extent of the powers given to the GUSM can be judged from the fact that at the beginning of the 1970s REB *osnaz* (radio-electronic warfare) was transferred from the control of the KGB to the control of the GUSM, though still preserving the name *osnaz*.

There are very close links existing between the GUSM and the GRU and between *spetsnaz* and the REB *osnaz*. In peacetime the REB *osnaz* transmits by radio 'top-secret' instructions from some Soviet headquarters to others. In time of war *spetsnaz* operations against headquarters and centres and lines of communications are conducted in the closest co-operation with the REB *osnaz*, which is ready to connect up with the enemy's lines of communication to transmit false information. An example of such an operation was provided in the manoeuvres of the Ural military district when a *spetsnaz* company operated against a major headquarters. *Spetsnaz* groups cut the communication lines and 'destroyed' the headquarters and at the same time an REB *osnaz* company hooked into the enemy's lines and began transmitting instructions to the enemy in the name of the headquarters that had been wiped out.

Even in peacetime the GUSM operates in a great variety of ways. For example, the Soviet Union derives much benefit from the activities of Western pacifists. A fictitious pacifist movement has been set up in the Soviet Union and Professor Chazov, the personal physician of the General Secretary of the Communist Party, has been made head of it. There are some who say that the movement is controlled by the Soviet leadership through the person of Chazov. Chazov, in addition to being responsible for the health of the General Secretary, is a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, i.e. one of the leaders who has real power in his hands. There are very few people who can manipulate him.

The mighty machinery of the GUSM was brought into operation in order to give this Communist leader some publicity. General Moshe Milshtein himself arrived in London in April 1982 to attend a conference of doctors opposed to nuclear warfare. There were many questions that had to be put to the general. What did he have to do with medicine? Where had he served, in what regiments and divisions? Where had he come by his genuine English accent? Did all Soviet generals speak such good English? And were all Soviet generals allowed to travel to Great Britain and conduct pacifist propaganda, or was it a privilege granted to a select few?

The result of this publicity stunt by the GUSM is well known -- the 'pacifist' Chazov, who has never once been known to condemn the murder of children in Afghanistan or the presence of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia, and who persecutes opponents of Communism in the USSR, received the Nobel Prize.

'But,' as Stalin said, 'in order to prepare new wars pacifism alone is not enough.'² That is why the Soviet leaders are preparing for another war not only with the aid of the pacifists but with the help of many other people and organisations which, knowingly or unwittingly, spread information which has been 'made in the GUSM'.

² *Leningradskaya Pravda*, 14 July 1928.

One of the sources spreading Soviet military disinformation is the GRU's network of agents, and in particular the agents of *spetsnaz*.

In the preparation of a strategic operation the GUSM's most important task is to ensure that the operation is totally unexpected by the enemy, particularly the place where it is to take place and the time it is due to start; its nature, and the weapons the troops will be using; and the number of troops and scope of the operation. All these elements must be planned so that the enemy has not prepared to resist. This is achieved by many years of intensive effort on the part of the GUSM at concealment. But concealment is twofold: the GUSM will, for example, conceal from the enemy advances in Soviet military science and the armaments industry, and at the same time demonstrate what the enemy wants to see.

This would provide material for a separate and lengthy piece of research. Here we are dealing only with *spetsnaz* and with what the GUSM does in connection with *spetsnaz*. GUSM experts have developed a whole system

aimed at preventing the enemy from being aware of the existence of *spetsnaz* and ensuring that he should have a very limited idea of its strength and the nature of the operations it will conduct. Some of the steps it takes we have already seen. To summarise:

1. Every prospective member of *spetsnaz* is secretly screened for his general reliability long before he is called into the Army.

2. Every man joining *spetsnaz* or the GRU has to sign a document promising not to reveal the secret of its existence. Any violation of this undertaking is punished as spying -- by the death sentence.

3. *Spetsnaz* units do not have their own uniform, their own badges or any other distinguishing mark, though it very often uses the uniform of the airborne troops and their badges. Naval *spetsnaz* wear the uniform of the naval infantry although they have nothing in common with that force. *Spetsnaz* units operating midget submarines wear the usual uniform of submariners. When they are in the countries of Eastern Europe the *spetsnaz* units wear the uniform of signals troops.

4. Not a single *spetsnaz* unit is quartered separately. They are all accommodated in military settlements along with airborne or air-assault troops. In the Navy *spetsnaz* units are accommodated in the military settlements of the naval infantry. The fact that they wear the same uniform and go through roughly the same kind of battle training makes it very difficult to detect *spetsnaz*. In Eastern Europe *spetsnaz* is located close to important headquarters because it is convenient to have them along with the signals troops. In the event of their being moved to military settlements belonging to other branches of the forces *spetsnaz* units immediately change uniform.

Agent units in *spetsnaz* are installed near specially well-defended targets -- missile bases, penal battalions and nuclear ammunition stores.

5. In the various military districts and groups of forces *spetsnaz* troops are known by different names -- as *reidoviki* ('raiders') in East Germany, and as *okhotniki* ('hunters') in the Siberian military district. *Spetsnaz* soldiers from different military districts who meet by chance consider themselves as part of different organisations. The common label *spetsnaz* is used only by officers among themselves.

6. *Spetsnaz* does not have its own schools or academies. The officer class is trained at the Kiev Higher Combined Officers' Training School (reconnaissance faculty) and at the Ryazan Higher Airborne School (special faculty). It is practically impossible to distinguish a *spetsnaz* student among the students of other faculties. Commanding officers and officers concerned with agent work are trained at the Military-Diplomatic Academy (the GRU Academy). I have already mentioned the use made of sports sections and teams for camouflaging the professional core of *spetsnaz*.

There are many other ways of concealing the presence of *spetsnaz* in a particular region and the existence of *spetsnaz* as a whole.

In *spetsnaz* everyone has his own nickname. As in the criminal underworld or at school, a person does not choose his own nickname, but is given it by others. A man may have several at the outset, then some of them are dropped until there remains only the one that sounds best and most pleases the people he works with. The use of nicknames greatly increases the chances of keeping *spetsnaz* operations secret. The nicknames can be

transmitted by radio without any danger. A good friend of mine was given the nickname Racing Pig. Suppose the head of Intelligence in a district sent the following radiogram, uncyphered: 'Racing Pig to go to post No. 10.' What could that tell an enemy if he intercepted it? On the other hand, the commander of the group will know the message is genuine, that it has been sent by one of his own men and nobody else. *Spetsnaz* seldom makes use of radio, and, if the head of Intelligence had to speak to the group again he would not repeat the name but would say another name to the deputy commander of the group: 'Dog's Heart to take orders from Gladiolus,' for example.

Before making a jump behind enemy lines, in battle or in training, a *spetsnaz* soldier will hand over to his company sergeant all his documents, private letters, photographs, everything he does not need on the campaign and everything that might enable someone to determine what unit he belongs to, his name, and so on. The *spetsnaz* soldier has no letters from the Russian alphabet on his clothes or footwear. There may be some figures which indicate the number he is known by in the Soviet armed forces, but that is all. An interesting point is that there are two letters in that number, and for the *spetsnaz* soldier they always select letters which are common to both the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets -- A, K, X, and so forth. An enemy coming across the corpse of a *spetsnaz* soldier will find no evidence that it is that of a Soviet soldier. One could, of course, guess, but the man could just as easily be a Bulgar, a Pole or a Czech.

Spetsnaz operates in exceptionally unfavourable conditions. It can survive and carry out a given mission only if the enemy's attention is spread over a vast area and he does not know where the main blow is to be struck.

With this aim, drops of large numbers of *spetsnaz* troops are not carried out in a single area but in smaller numbers and in several areas at the same time. The dropping zones may be separated from each other by hundreds of kilometres, and apart from the main areas of operation for *spetsnaz* other, subsidiary areas are chosen as well: these are areas of real interest to *spetsnaz*, so as to make the enemy believe that that is the area where the main *spetsnaz* threat is likely to appear, and they are chosen as carefully as the main ones. The decision as to which area will be a prime one and which a subsidiary is taken by the high command on the very eve of the operation. Sometimes circumstances change so rapidly that a change in the area of operation may take place even as the planes are over enemy territory.

The deception of the enemy over the main and subsidiary areas of operation begins with the deception of the men taking part in the operation. Companies, battalions, regiments and brigades exist as single fighting units. But during the period of training for the operation, groups and detachments are formed in accordance with the actual situation and to carry out a specific task. The strength and armament of each group is worked out specially. Before carrying out an operation every detachment and every group is isolated from the other groups and detachments and is trained to carry out the operation planned for that particular group. The commander and his deputy are given the exact area of operations and are given information about enemy operations in the given area and about operations there by

spetsnaz groups and detachments. Sometimes this information is very detailed (if groups and detachments have to operate jointly), at others it is only superficial, just enough to prevent neighbouring commanders getting in each other's way.

Sometimes the commander of a group or detachment is told the truth, sometimes he is deceived. A *spetsnaz* officer knows that he can be deceived, and that he cannot always detect with any certainty what is true and what is a lie.

Commanders of groups and detachments who are to take part in operations in reserve areas are usually told that their area is the main one and the most important, that there is already a large force of *spetsnaz* operating there or that such a force will soon appear there. The commander of a group that is operating in the main area may be told, on the contrary, that apart from his groups there are very few groups operating in the area. Irrespective of what the commander is told he is given quite specific tasks, for whose accomplishment he answers with his head in the most literal sense.

In any operation the GRU high command keeps a *spetsnaz* reserve on its own territory. Even in the course of the operation some groups may receive an order to withdraw from the main areas into the reserve areas. *Spetsnaz* reserves may be dropped into the reserve areas, which then become main areas of operations. In this way the enemy obtains information about *spetsnaz* simultaneously in many areas, and it is exceptionally difficult to determine where the main areas and where the reserve ones are. Consequently the enemy's main forces may be thrown against relatively small groups and detachments which are conducting real military operations but which are none the less a false target for the enemy. Even if the enemy establishes which are the main areas of *spetsnaz* operations the enemy may be too late. Many *spetsnaz* groups and detachments will already be leaving the area, but those that remain there will be ordered to step up their activity; the enemy thus gets the impression that this area is still the main one. So as not to dispel this illusion, the groups remaining in the area are ordered by the Soviet high command to prepare to receive fresh *spetsnaz* reinforcements, are sent increased supplies and are continually told that they are doing the main job. But they are not told that their comrades left the area long ago for a reserve area that has now become a main one.

At the same time as the main and reserve areas are chosen, false areas of operations for *spetsnaz* are set. A false, or phoney, area is created in the following way. A small *spetsnaz* group with a considerable supply of mines is dropped into the area secretly. The group lays the mines on important targets, setting the detonators in such a way that all the mines will blow up at roughly the same time. Then automatic radio transmitters are fixed up in inaccessible places which are also carefully mined. This done, the *spetsnaz* group withdraws from the area and gets involved in operations in a quite different place. Then another *spetsnaz* group is dropped into the same area with the task of carrying out an especially daring operation.

This group is told that it is to be operating in an area of special importance where there are many other groups also operating. At an agreed moment the Soviet air force contributes a display of activity over the particular area. For this purpose real planes are used, which have just finished dropping genuine groups in another area. The route they follow has to be deliberately complicated, with several phoney places where they drop torn parachutes and shroud-lines, airborne troops' equipment, boxes of

ammunition, tins of food, and so forth.

Next day the enemy observes the following scene. In an area of dense forest in which there are important targets there are obvious traces of the presence of Soviet parachutists. In many places in the same area there had been simultaneous explosions. In broad daylight a group of Soviet terrorists had stopped the car of an important official on the road and brutally murdered him and got away with his case full of documents. At the same time the enemy had noted throughout the area a high degree of activity by *spetsnaz* radio transmitters using a system of rapid and super-rapid transmission which made it very difficult to trace them. What does the enemy general have to do, with all these facts on his desk?

To lead the enemy further astray *spetsnaz* uses human dummies, clothed in uniform and appropriately equipped. The dummies are dropped in such a way that the enemy sees the drop but cannot immediately find the landing place. For this purpose the drop is carried out over mountains or forests, but far away from inhabited places and places where the enemy's troops are located. The drops are usually made at dawn, sunset or on a moonlit night. They are never made in broad daylight because it is then seen to be an obvious piece of deception, while on a dark night the drop may not be noticed at all.

The enemy will obviously discover first the dummies in the areas which are the *main* places for *spetsnaz* operations. The presence of the dummies may raise doubts in the enemy's mind about whether the dummies indicate that it is not a false target area but the very reverse.... The most important thing is to disorient the enemy completely. If there are few *spetsnaz* forces available, then it must be made to appear that there are lots of them around. If there are plenty of them, it should be made to appear that there are very few. If their mission is to destroy aircraft it must look as if their main target is a power station, and *vice versa*. Sometimes a group will lay mines on targets covering a long distance, such as oil pipelines, electricity power lines, roads and bridges along the roads. In such cases they set the first detonators to go off with a very long delay and as they advance they make the delay steadily shorter. The group then withdraws to one side and changes its direction of advance completely. The successive explosions then take place in the opposite direction to the one in which the group was moving.

Along with operations in the main, reserve and false areas there may also be operations by *spetsnaz* professional groups working in conditions of special secrecy. The Soviet air force plays no part in such operations. Even if the groups are dropped by parachute it takes place some distance away and the groups leave the drop zone secretly. Relatively small but very carefully trained groups of professional athletes are chosen for such operations. Their movements can be so carefully concealed that even their acts of terrorism are carried out in such a way as to give the enemy the impression that the particular tragedy is the result of some natural disaster or of some other circumstances unconnected with Soviet military intelligence or with terrorism in general. All the other activity of *spetsnaz* serves as a sort of cover for such specially trained groups. The enemy concentrates his attention on the main, reserve and false target areas, not suspecting the existence of secret areas in which the organisation is also operating: secret areas which could very easily be the most dangerous for the enemy.

Chapter 14. Future Prospects

Spetsnaz continues to grow. In the first place its ranks are swelling. In the next few years *spetsnaz* companies on the army level are expected to become battalions, and there is much evidence to suggest that this process has already begun. Such a reorganisation would mean an increase in the strength of *spetsnaz* by 10,000 men. But that is not the end of it. Already at the end of the 1970s the possibility was being discussed of increasing the number of regiments at the strategic level from three to five. The brigades at front level could, without any increase in the size of the support units, raise the number of fighting battalions from three or four to five. The possibilities of increasing the strength of *spetsnaz* are entirely realistic and evoke legitimate concern among Western experts.¹

¹ See Appendices for notes on organisation.

The principal direction being taken by efforts to improve the quality of the *spetsnaz* formations is mechanisation. No one disputes the advantages of mechanisation. A mechanised *spetsnaz* soldier is able to withdraw much more quickly from the dropping zone. He can cover great distances much more quickly and inspect much larger areas than can a soldier on foot. And he can get quickly into contact with the enemy and inflict sudden blows on him, and then get quickly away from where the enemy may strike him and pursue him.

But the problem of mechanisation is a difficult one. The *spetsnaz* soldier operates in forests, marshland, mountains, deserts and even in enormous cities. *Spetsnaz* needs a vehicle capable of transporting a *spetsnaz* soldier in all these conditions, and one that enables him to be as silent and practically invisible as he is now.

There have been many scientific conferences dealing with the question of providing *spetsnaz* with a means of transport, but they have not yet produced any noticeable results. Soviet experts realise that it will not be possible to create a single machine to meet *spetsnaz* needs, and that they will have to develop a whole family of vehicles with various features, each of them intended for operations in particular conditions.

One of the ways of increasing the mobility of *spetsnaz* behind enemy lines is to provide part of the unit with very lightweight motorcycles capable of operating on broken terrain. Various versions of the snow-tractor are being developed for use in northern regions. *Spetsnaz* also uses cross-country vehicles. Some of them amount to no more than a platform half a metre high, a metre and a half wide and two or three metres long mounted on six or eight wheels. Such a vehicle can easily be dropped by parachute, and it has considerable cross-country ability in very difficult terrain, including marshland and sand. It is capable of transporting a *spetsnaz* group for long distances, and in case of necessity the group's base can be moved around on such vehicles while the group operates on foot.

The introduction of such vehicles and motorcycles into *spetsnaz* does more than increase its mobility; it also increases its fire-power through the use of heavier armament that can be transported on the vehicles, as well as a larger supply of ammunition.

The vehicles, motorcycles and snow-tractors are developments being decided today, and in the near future we shall see evidence that these ideas are being put into practice. In the more distant future the Soviet high command wants to see the *spetsnaz* soldier airborne. The most likely solution will be for each soldier to have an apparatus attached to his back which will enable him to make jumps of several tens or even hundreds of metres. Such an apparatus could act as a universal means of transport in any terrain, including mountains. Since the beginning of the 1950s intensive research has been going on in the Soviet Union on this problem. It would appear that there have so far been no tangible achievements in this field, but there has been no reduction in the effort put into the research, despite many failures.

The same objective -- to make the *spetsnaz* soldier airborne, or at least capable of big leaps -- has also been pursued by the Kamov design office, which has for several decades, along with designing small helicopters, been trying to create a midget helicopter sufficient for just one man. Army-General Margelov once said that 'an apparatus must be created that will eliminate the boundary between the earth and the sky.' Earth-bound vehicles cannot fly, while aircraft and helicopters are defenceless on the ground. Margelov's idea was that they should try to create a very light apparatus that would enable a soldier to flit like a dragon-fly from one leaf to another. What they needed was to turn the Soviet soldier operating behind enemy lines into a sort of insect capable of operating both on the ground and in the air (though not very high up) and also of switching from one state to the other without effort.

Every farmer knows that it is easier to kill a wild buffalo that is ruining his crops than to kill a mass of insects that have descended on his plants at night. The Soviet high command dreams of a day when the neighbour's garden can be invaded not only by buffaloes but by mad elephants too, and swarms of voracious insects at the same time. On a more practical basis for now, intensive research is being conducted in the Soviet Union to develop new ways of dropping men by parachute. The work is testing out a variety of new ideas, one such being the 'container drop', in other words the construction of a container with several men in it which would be dropped on one freight parachute. This method makes it possible to reduce considerably the amount of time set aside for training soldiers how to jump by parachute: training time which can be better spent on more useful things. The container enables the people in it to start firing at targets as they are landing and immediately afterwards. The container method makes it much easier to keep the men together in one spot and solves the problem of assembling a group after it has been dropped. But there are a whole lot of technical problems connected with the development of such containers for air drops, and I am not competent to judge when they may be solved.

Another idea being studied is the possibility of constructing parachutes that can glide; hybrid creations combining the qualities of the parachute and the hang-glider. This would make it possible for the transport aircraft to fly along the least dangerous routes and to drop the parachutists over safe areas far from the target they are making for. A man using his own gliding parachute can descend slowly or remain at one level or even climb higher. Since they are able to control the direction of their flight the *spetsnaz* groups can approach their targets noiselessly from various directions.

The hang-glider, especially one equipped with a very light motor, is the subject of enormous interest to the GRU. It makes it possible not only to fly from one's own territory to the enemy's territory without using transport planes, but also to make short flights on the enemy's territory so as to penetrate to targets, to evade any threat from the enemy and to perform other tasks.

The hang-glider with a motor (the *motodeltoplan*) is the cheapest flying machine and the one easiest to control. The motor has made it possible to take off from quite small, even patches of ground. It is no longer necessary to clamber up a hillside in order to take off. But the most important feature of the motorised hand-glider is, of course, the concealment it provides. Experiments show that very powerful radar systems are often quite unable to detect a hang-glider. Its flight is noiseless, because the motor is used only for taking off and gaining height. By flying with the motor shut off the man on the hang-glider is protected from heat-seeking means of detection and attack.

The distance that motorised hang-gliders can fly is quite sufficient for *spetsnaz*. It is enough to allow a man to take off quite a long way behind the frontier, cross it and land deep in the enemy's rear. Flight in a dangerous area can be carried out at very low altitudes. They are now developing in the Soviet Union a piece of equipment that will make it possible for motorised hang-gliders to fly at very low altitudes following the contours of the ground. Flights will have to take place at night and in conditions of bad visibility, and a simple, lightweight but reliable navigation aid is being developed too.

The motorised hang-glider can be used for other purposes apart from transporting *spetsnaz* behind the enemy's lines. It can be used for identifying and even for destroying especially important enemy targets. Experiments show that the *deltoplan* can carry light machine-guns, grenade-launchers and rockets, which makes it an exceptionally dangerous weapon in the hands of *spetsnaz*. The main danger presented by these 'insects' is of course not to be found in their individual qualities but in their numbers. Any insect on its own can easily be swatted. But a swarm of insects is a problem which demands serious thought: it is not easy to find a way of dealing with them.

The officers commanding the GRU know exactly the sort of *deltoplan* that *spetsnaz* needs in the foreseeable future. It has to be a machine that needs no more than twenty-five metres to take off, has a rate of climb of not less than a metre per second, and has a motor with a power of not more than 30 kilowatts which must have good heat isolation and make a noise of not more than 55 decibels. The machine must be capable of lifting a payload of 120 to 150 kilograms (reconnaissance equipment, armaments, ammunition). Work on its development, like the work carried out in the 1930s on the first midget submarines, is being carried on simultaneously and independently by several groups of designers.

The GRU realises that hang-gliders can be very vulnerable in daytime and that they are also very sensitive to changes in the weather. There are three possible ways of overcoming these difficulties: improving the construction of the machines themselves and improving the professional skills of the pilots; employing them suddenly and in large numbers on a wide front, using many combinations of direction and height; and using them only in conjunction with many other weapons and ways of fighting, and the use of

a great variety of different devices and tricks to neutralise the enemy.

At the same time as developing ways of dropping people in the enemy's rear, work is being done on methods for returning *spetsnaz* units to their own territory. This is not as important as the business of dropping them; nevertheless there are situations when it is necessary to find some way of transporting someone from a group, or a whole group, back to Soviet territory. For many years now this has sometimes been done with low-flying aircraft, but this is a risky method which has yet to be perfected. Better methods are needed for evacuating men from territories where there is no sea nearby, where the helicopter cannot be used and where an aircraft cannot land.

A Soviet general named Meshcheryakov opened up a vast area for study and research when he made the proposal that the armed forces should 'create for *spetsnaz* the kind of conditions in which no one should interfere with its work'. There are many problems here which Soviet science is concentrating on trying to solve. Who interferes with the work of *spetsnaz*? Primarily the enemy's radar system. Radar installations interfere with the activity of the entire Soviet Army. In order to open the way for the Soviet Army into the territory of the enemy it is necessary first of all to 'blind' the enemy's radar system. That is always one of *spetsnaz*'s principal tasks. But to carry it out, the radars obstructing *spetsnaz* itself have somehow to be put out of action. One solution to this problem is, prior to dropping the main *spetsnaz* force, to send small groups behind the enemy's lines who will clear the way for *spetsnaz* which will in turn clear the way for the whole Soviet Army. Such a solution can be regarded as satisfactory only because no other solution has so far been found. But terrific effort is being put into the work of finding some other solution. The Soviet high command needs a technical solution, some method that would make it possible, even for a short period, simultaneously to 'blind' the enemy's radar over a fairly wide area, so as to give the first wave of *spetsnaz* the opportunity to carry out its mission.

Anti-aircraft systems are the main killers of *spetsnaz*. The soldier in a transport aircraft is utterly defenceless. One quite small missile, or even a shell, can kill *spetsnaz* troops in whole groups. What can be done to put out of action the anti-aircraft defence systems at least on a narrow sector before the arrival of the main force of *spetsnaz* on the enemy's territory? Much thought is being devoted to this. The solution may be technical. GRU's spies may help. But *spetsnaz* can help itself by recruiting an agent long before the war begins and teaching him what to do on receipt of a sign from the centre.

Once it has arrived in enemy territory *spetsnaz* is vulnerable from the moment of landing to the moment of meeting up with its own troops.

In order to increase its effectiveness and create conditions in which 'no one should interfere with its work' intensive work is being done on the development of jamming stations to be used in areas where *spetsnaz* is operating, to prevent the enemy's electronic devices (radio receivers and transmitters, radars, optical-electronic devices, computers and any other instruments) from working normally so as to interfere with the co-ordination of the various enemy forces operating against *spetsnaz*.

Aircraft and helicopters cause a great deal of trouble for *spetsnaz*. *Spetsnaz* already has fairly impressive means of its own for defending itself from air attacks, but work is now going on to provide *spetsnaz* groups with a reliable anti-helicopter weapon, and to develop a weapon capable of covering considerable areas or even of establishing zones free of all air activity by the enemy.

Finally, weapons systems are being developed of which the main purpose will be to isolate fairly large areas from penetration by the enemy's ground forces. This involves the use of mines and automatic guns mounted and hidden near bridges, crossroads, tunnels and so forth, which operate automatically and destroy the enemy trying to transfer reinforcements into the area where *spetsnaz* is operating and so to interfere with its work.

The process of seeking out especially important targets in the enemy's territory will in future be carried out not so much by *spetsnaz* men on foot or even 'jumping' as by automatic machines of a fairly simple (not by today's standards perhaps, but certainly by tomorrow's) and reliable construction.

Work has been going on for quite a long time on the development of light (up to 100 kilograms) cross-country vehicles with remote control. The vehicles tested have mostly been driven by electricity. They have been steered by remote control with the aid of television cameras installed inside them, similar to some modern bomb-disposal equipment. Apart from using them to find the targets, experiments have been conducted into using them to destroy targets by means of a grenade-launcher mounted in the vehicle or an explosive charge that detonates on contact with the target. The rapid advances in electronics open up enormous possibilities for the development of light remote-controlled vehicles capable of covering large areas quickly and noiselessly and of destroying targets in enemy territory.

Pilotless aircraft have long been used for identifying targets over large areas, and the Soviet Union is a leader in this field. Take, for example, the Soviet strategic high-flying pilotless rocket-driven plane known as the 'Yastreb'. A tremendous amount of work is being done on the development of relatively small pilotless spy-planes. In the future such planes will take off not only from Soviet territory but from enemy territory as well. Soviet airborne troops and *spetsnaz* have for long been very keenly interested in the possibility of developing a very light pilotless aircraft that could be put together and launched on enemy territory, survey vast areas and transmit a picture to Soviet troops. The ideal aircraft would be one carrying not only the equipment for carrying out reconnaissance but an explosive charge as well. Once it discovered the target and transmitted a picture of it, it could attack it independently. There is nothing fantastic about this plan. Modern technology is quite capable of building such an aircraft. The problem is simply to make the aircraft sufficiently light, cheap, reliable and accurate.

Advances in *spetsnaz* follow the usual paths. While this research goes on at the cutting edge of Soviet military power: improvements are being made to the familiar weapons and increases in the range, accuracy and fire-power of grenade-launchers, rifles and other armament; improvements in the quality of footwear, clothes, soldiers' equipment and means of communication of all

kinds; and reductions in the weight of weapons like mines along with an increase in their destructive potential.

Chapter 15. *Spetsnaz's* First World War

I was standing on the top of an enormous skyscraper in New York when I saw King Kong. The huge gorilla surveyed Manhattan triumphantly from a dizzy height. Of course I knew it wasn't real. But there was something both frightening and symbolic in that huge black figure.

I learnt later that the gorilla was a rubber one, that it had been decided to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the showing of the first film about King Kong by creating a gigantic inflatable model of the beast and placing it high above New York. The rubber monster was hauled up and swayed about in the wind. From the technical point of view the operation had been a real triumph by the engineers and workmen who had taken part in it. But it was not an entire success. The monster turned out to be too huge, with the result that holes appeared in its body through which the air could escape. So the gigantic muscular frame quickly collapsed into a shapeless bag. They had to pump more air into it, but the harder they pumped the bigger the holes became and the quicker the air escaped from the monster. So they had to keep on pumping....

The Communist leaders have also created a rubber monster and have hauled it up to a dizzy height. The monster is known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the Soviet leaders are faced with a dilemma: to expand or to decline rapidly and become a flabby sack. It is interesting to note that the Soviet Union became a superpower in the course of the most destructive war in the history of civilisation, in spite of the fact that it suffered the greatest loss of life and the greatest destruction on its own territory. It has become a military superpower and perhaps war is essential for its existence.

I do not know how or when World War Three will start. I do not know exactly how the Soviet high command plans to make use of *spetsnaz* in that war: the first world war in which *spetsnaz* will be a major contributor. I do not wish to predict the future. In this chapter I shall describe how *spetsnaz* will be used at the beginning of that war as I imagine it. It is not my task to describe what will happen. But I can describe what *might happen*.

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The last month of peace, as in other wars, has an almost palpable air of crisis about it. Incidents, accidents, small disasters add to the tension. Two trains collide on a railway bridge in Cologne because the signalling system is out of order. The bridge is seriously damaged and there can be no traffic over it for the next two months.

In the port of Rotterdam a Polish supertanker bursts into flames. Because of an error by the captain the tanker is far too close to the oil storage tanks on the shore, and the burning oil spreads around the harbour. For two weeks fire brigades summoned from practically the whole country

fight an heroic battle with the flames. The port suffers tremendous losses. The fire appears to have spread at a quite incredible speed, and some experts are of the opinion that the Polish tanker was not the only cause of the fire, that the fire broke out simultaneously in many places.

In the Panama Canal the *Varna*, a Bulgarian freighter loaded with heavy containers, rams the lock gates by mistake. Experts reckoned that the ship should have remained afloat, but for some reason she sinks there and then. To reopen the canal could well take many months. The Bulgarian government sends its apologies and declares itself ready to pay for all the work involved.

In Washington, as the President's helicopter is taking off, several shots are fired at it from sniper's rifles. The helicopter is only slightly damaged and the crew succeed in bringing it down again safely. No one in the craft is hurt. Responsibility for the attack is claimed by a previously unknown organisation calling itself 'Revenge for Vietnam'.

There is a terrorist explosion at Vienna airport.

A group of unidentified men attack the territory of the British military base in Cyprus with mortars.

A serious accident takes place on the most important oil pipeline in Alaska. The pumping stations break down and the flow of oil falls to a trickle.

In West Germany there are several unsuccessful attempts on the lives of American generals.

In the North Sea the biggest of the British oil rigs tips over and sinks. The precise reason for this is not established, although experts believe that corrosion of main supports is the culprit.

In the United States an epidemic of some unidentified disease breaks out and spreads rapidly. It seems to affect port areas particularly, such as San Francisco, Boston, Charleston, Seattle, Norfolk and Philadelphia.

There are explosions practically every day in Paris. The main targets are the government districts, communication centres and military headquarters. At the same time terrible forest fires are raging in the South of France.

All these operations -- because of course none of these events is an accident -- and others like them are known officially in the GRU as the 'preparatory period', and unofficially as the 'overture'. The overture is a series of large and small operations the purpose of which is, before actual military operations begin, to weaken the enemy's morale, create an atmosphere of general suspicion, fear and uncertainty, and divert the attention of the enemy's armies and police forces to a huge number of different targets, each of which may be the object of the next attack.

The overture is carried by agents of the secret services of the Soviet satellite countries and by mercenaries recruited by intermediaries. The principal method employed at this stage is 'grey terror', that is, a kind of terror which is not conducted in the name of the Soviet Union. The Soviet secret services do not at this stage leave their visiting cards, or leave other people's cards. The terror is carried out in the name of already existing extremist groups not connected in any way with the Soviet Union, or in the name of fictitious organisations.

The GRU reckons that in this period its operations should be regarded as natural disasters, actions by forces beyond human control, mistakes committed by people, or as terrorist acts by organisations not connected

with the Soviet Union.

The terrorist acts carried out in the course of the 'overture' require very few people, very few weapons and little equipment. In some cases all that may be needed is one man who has as a weapon nothing more than a screwdriver, a box of matches or a glass ampoule. Some of the operations can have catastrophic consequences. For example, an epidemic of an infectious disease at seven of the most important naval bases in the West could have the effect of halving the combined naval might of the Soviet Union's enemies.

The 'overture' could last from several weeks to several months, gradually gathering force and embracing fresh regions. At the same time the GUSM would become involved. Photographs compromising a NATO chief appear on the front pages of Western newspapers. A scandal explodes. It appears that some of the NATO people have been having meetings with high-ranking Soviet diplomats and handing over top secret papers. All efforts to refute the story only fuel the fire. The public demands the immediate dismissal of NATO's chiefs and a detailed enquiry. Fresh details about the affair are published in the papers and the scandal increases in scope. At that moment the KGB and GRU can take out and dust off a tremendous quantity of material and put it into circulation. The main victims now are the people whom the Soviets had tried to recruit but failed. Now carefully edited and annotated materials get into the hands of the press. Soviet Intelligence has tried to recruit thousands, even tens of thousands, of people in its time. They include young lieutenants who have now become generals and third secretaries who have now become ambassadors. All of them rejected Soviet efforts to recruit them, and now Soviet Intelligence avenges their refusal. The number of scandalous affairs increases. The nations discover to their surprise that there are very few people to be trusted. The Soviet intelligence service has nothing to lose if the press gets hold of material showing that it tried to recruit a French general, without saying how the attempt ended. It has even less to lose on the eve of war. That is why the newspapers are full of demands for investigations and reports of resignations, dismissals and suicides. The best way of killing a general is to kill him with his own hands.

There is a marked increase in the strength of the peace movement. In many countries there are continual demands to make the country neutral and not to support American foreign policy, which has been discredited. At this point the 'grey terror' gathers scope and strength and in the last days of peace reaches its peak.

From the first moment of the first day of war the main forces of *spetsnaz* go into action. From then on the terror is conducted in the name of the Soviet Union and of the Communist leadership: 'red terror'.

But between the 'grey' and the 'red' terror there may be an intermediate period -- the 'pink' terror, when active military operations have not yet begun and there is still peace, but when some of the best *spetsnaz* units have already gone into action. The situation is complicated by the fact that, on the one hand, Soviet fighting units are already in battle, but that, on the other hand, they are not yet operating in the name of the Soviet Union. This is an exceptionally risky moment for the Soviet high command. But he who risks nothing gains nothing. The Soviet commanders want to gain a great deal, and so are ready to risk a lot. A great deal has of course been done to reduce the level of risk. Only a relatively small

number of *spetsnaz* troops take part in the 'pink' terror, but they are the best people in *spetsnaz* -- professional athletes of Olympic class. Everything has been done to make sure that not one of them should fall into the hands of the enemy before the outbreak of war. A great deal has also been done to ensure that, if one of them should fall into enemy hands at that moment, it would be very difficult to establish his connection with any country whatsoever.

The 'pink' terror may continue for no more than a few hours. But those are the most important hours and minutes -- the very last hours and minutes of peace. It is very important that those hours and minutes should be spoilt for the enemy and used for the maximum advantage to the Soviet side. It must be pointed out that the 'pink' terror may not be carried out at all. It is used only when there is absolute certainty of the success of the operations and equal certainty that the enemy will not be able in the remaining hours and minutes to assess the situation correctly and strike the first pre-emptive blow.

For Soviet Communists the month of August has a special significance. It was in August that the First World War began, which resulted in revolutions in Russia, Germany and Hungary. In August 1939 Georgi Zhukov succeeded in doing something that no one before him had managed to do: with a sudden blow he routed a group of Japanese forces in the Far East. It is possible that that blow had very far-reaching consequences: Japan decided against attacking the Soviet Union and chose to advance in other directions. Also in August 1939 a pact was signed in the Kremlin which opened the flood gates for the Second World War, as a result of which the USSR became a super-power. In August 1945 the Soviet Union carried out a treacherous attack on Japan and Manchuria. In the course of three weeks of intensive operations huge territories roughly equal in area and population to Eastern Europe were 'liberated'. In August 1961 the Soviet Union built the Berlin Wall, in violation of international agreements it had signed. In August 1968 the Soviet Army 'liberated' Czechoslovakia and, to its great surprise, did not meet with any opposition from the West. Suppose the Soviet Communists again choose August for starting a war....

On 12 August, at 0558 local time, a van comes to a halt on the vast empty parking lot in front of a supermarket in Washington. Three men open the doors of the van, roll out the fuselage of a light aircraft and attach its wings. A minute later its motor bursts into life. The plane takes off and disappears into the sky. It has no pilot. It is controlled by radio with the aid of very simple instruments, only slightly more complicated than those used by model aircraft enthusiasts. The plane climbs to about 200 metres and immediately begins to descend in the direction of the White House. A minute later a mighty explosion shakes the capital of the United States. The screaming of sirens on police cars, fire engines and ambulances fills the city.

Three minutes later a second plane sweeps across the centre of the city and there is a second explosion in the place where the White House once

stood. The second plane has taken off from a section of highway under construction, and has a quite different control system. Two cars with radio beacons in them have been left earlier in the middle of the city. The beacons have switched on automatically a few seconds before the plane's take-off. The automatic pilot is guided by the two beacons and starts to descend according to a previously worked-out trajectory. The second plane has been sent off by a second group operating independently of the first one.

It was a simple plan: if the first plane did not destroy the White House the second would. If the first plane did destroy the White House then a few minutes later all the heads of the Washington police would be near where the explosion had taken place. The second plane would kill many of them.

At 0606 all radio and television channels interrupt their normal programmes and report the destruction of the White House and the possible death of the President of the United States.

At 0613 the programme known as Good Morning America is interrupted and the Vice-President of the USA appears. He announces a staggering piece of news: there has been an attempt to seize power in the country on the part of the leaders of the armed forces. The President of the United States has been killed. The Vice-President appeals to everyone in the armed forces to remain where they are and not to carry out any orders from senior officers for the next twenty-four hours, because the orders would be issued by traitors shortly to be removed from their posts and arrested.

Soon afterwards many television channels across the country cease transmitting....

The Soviet military leaders know that if it doesn't prove possible to destroy the President of the United States in peacetime, it will be practically impossible to do so at a time of crisis. The President will be in an underground, or airborne, command post, somewhere extremely inaccessible and extremely well guarded.

Consequently the leaders, while not abandoning attempts to kill the President (for which purpose several groups of assassins with every kind of weapon, including anti-aircraft missiles, have been dropped in the country), decide to carry out an operation aimed at causing panic and confusion. If it proves impossible to kill the President then they will have to reduce his capacity to rule the country and its armed forces at the most critical moment.

To carry out this task the Soviets have secretly transferred to Washington a *spetsnaz* company from the first *spetsnaz* regiment at the strategic level. A large part of the company is made up of women. The entire complement of the company is professional athletes of Olympic standard. It has taken several months to transfer the whole company to Washington. The athletes have arrived in the guise of security men, drivers and technicians working in the Soviet embassy and other Soviet establishments, and their weapons and equipment have been brought in in containers covered by diplomatic privilege. The company has been split into eight groups to carry out its mission. Each group has its own organisation, structure, weapons and equipment. To carry out their tasks some of the groups will have to make

contact with secret agents recruited a long time previously by the GRU *rezidentura*.

On 11 August the GRU *rezident* in Washington, a major-general known by the code-name of 'Mudry' (officially a civilian and a high-ranking diplomat) receives an encyphered telegram consisting of one single word -- 'Yes'. On the *rezident's* orders the *spetsnaz* company leave their places of work. Some of them simply go back home. Some are transported secretly in the boots of their cars by GRU officers and dropped in the woods round the city, in empty underground garages and other secluded places.

The group commanders gather their groups together in previously agreed places and set about carrying out their tasks.

Group No. 1 consists of three men and the group is backed up by one secret agent. The agent works as a mechanic at an airport. In his spare time he builds flying models of aircraft of various sizes. This particular model was designed by the best Soviet aircraft designers and put together in America from spares bought in the open market. The agent himself does not play any part in the operation. A van containing a light radio-guided aircraft and its separate wings has been standing in his garage for some months. What the aircraft is for and to whom it belongs the agent does not know. He only knows that someone has the keys to the garage and that that person can at any moment come and take the van along with the aircraft. In the middle of the night the *spetsnaz* group drives the van out into the forest where they take the explosive charges from a secret hiding place and prepare the plane for flight. At dawn the van is standing in the deserted parking lot.

Group No. 2 is doing roughly the same at that time. But this group has three agents working for it, two of whom have left their cars with radio beacons parked in precisely defined spots in the centre of the city.

Group No. 3 consists of fifteen *spetsnaz* men and five experts from the REB *osnaz*. They are all wearing police uniforms. At night the group kidnaps the director of a television company and his family. Leaving the family at home as hostages guarded by three *spetsnaz* men, the rest of the group make their way to the studios, capturing two more highly placed officials on their way, also as hostages, but without giving cause for noise or panic among the staff. Then, with guns threatening them and supervised by Soviet electronics experts, the director and his assistants insert, instead of the usual advertising programme, a video cassette which the commander of the group has given him. The video cassette has been made up in advance in the Soviet Union. The role of the Vice-President is played by an actor.

The Soviet high command knows that it is very difficult to cut into American military channels. If it is at all possible, then at best it will be possible to do no more than overhear conversations or interrupt them. It is practically impossible to use them for transmitting false orders at the strategic level. That is why it is decided to make use of the civilian television network: it is difficult to get into a television studio, but it is possible and there are many to choose from. Operations are carried out simultaneously in several different cities against various TV companies. If the operation succeeds in only one city it will not matter -- millions of people will be disoriented at the most critical moment.

The operational plan has provided that, just after the 'Vice-President' has spoken several retransmitters will be destroyed by other *spetsnaz* groups and one of the American communication satellites will be shot down 'by

mistake' by a Soviet satellite. This is intended to deprive the President and the real Vice-President of the opportunity to refute the false declaration.

But events do not go entirely according to plan. The President succeeds in addressing the people and issuing a denial of the report. After the television network throughout America has suffered such major damage, the radio immediately becomes the principal means of communication. Radio commentators produce different commentaries about what is happening. The majority of them report that it is difficult to say which report is genuine and which was false, but that the only fact about which there is no doubt is that the White House has been destroyed.

At the moment when all these events are taking place in Washington another *spetsnaz* company from the same regiment is ordered by the GRU *rezident* in New York to carry out the same operation but on a much larger scale. They do not make use of radio-guided aircraft, but seize two television studios and one radio studio which they use for transmitting the same false report. Five other *spetsnaz* groups emerge from official Soviet offices and make open, armed attacks on underground cables and some radio and TV transmitting and receiving aerials. They manage to damage them and also some transformer stations, as a result of which millions of TV screens go blank.

A few hours later *spetsnaz* detachment I-M-7 of 120 men lands in New York harbour from a freighter sailing under a Liberian flag. Using its fire-power the detachment makes its way to the nearest subway station and, splitting into small groups and seizing a train with hostages, sets about destroying the underground communications of the city.

In the area around the berths of America's huge aircraft-carriers and nuclear submarines in Norfolk, several mini-submersibles are discovered, as well as underwater saboteurs with aqualungs.

In Alaska eighteen different places are recorded where small groups have tried to land from Soviet naval vessels, submarines and aircraft. Some of the groups have been destroyed as they landed, others have managed to get back to their ships or, after landing successfully, hidden in the forests.

Spetsnaz detachment I-S-7 consisting of eighty-two men lands on the coast of Mexico, immediately commandeers private cars, and the next night, using their fire-power and new mobility, cross the United States border.

Small *spetsnaz* groups land and use routes and methods employed by illegal immigrants, while others make use of paths and methods used by drug dealers.

Islands and the military installations on them are more vulnerable to sabotage operations, and at the same moment *spetsnaz* groups are landing on Okinawa and Guam, on Diego Garcia, in Greenland and dozens of other islands on which the West has bases.

Spetsnaz group 2-S-13 has spent three weeks aboard a small Soviet fishing vessel fishing close to the shores of Ireland. On receiving the signal '393939' the ship's captain gives the order to cut the nets, switch off the radio, radar and navigation lights and set course at top speed for the shores of Great Britain.

In darkness two light speed-boats are lowered from the side of the

ship. They are big enough to take the whole group. In the first boat is the group commander, a lieutenant with the code-name of 'Shakespeare', a radio operator, a machine-gunner and two snipers. In the second boat is the deputy group commander, a junior lieutenant with the code-name 'Poet', two soldiers with flame-throwers and two snipers. Each man has a supply of food for three days, which is supposed to be used only in the event of being pursued for a long period. For general purposes the group has to obtain its food independently, as best it can. The group also includes two huge German shepherd dogs.

After landing the group the little fishing vessel, still without lights or radio, puts out into the open sea. The ship's captain is hoping to hide away in a neutral port in Ireland. If the vessel is stopped at sea by a British naval patrol the captain and his crew have nothing to fear: the dangerous passengers have left the fishing boat and all traces of their presence on it have already been removed.

'Shakespeare's' group lands on a tiny beach close to Little Haven. The landing place has been chosen long ago, and very well chosen: the beach is shut in on three sides by huge cliffs, so that even in daytime it is impossible to see from a distance what is going on on the beach itself.

At the same time as 'Shakespeare' four other *spetsnaz* groups are going ashore in different places two or three kilometres apart. Operating independently of each other, these four groups arrive by different routes at the little village of Brawdy and at 3.30 in the morning they make a simultaneous attack from different directions on a large building belonging to the United States Navy. According to reports received by the GRU, hundreds, and possibly thousands, of acoustic listening posts have been set up in the region of the Atlantic Ocean. The underwater cables from these posts come together at Brawdy where hundreds of American experts analyse with the aid of a computer a huge amount of information about the movement of submarines and surface ships all over the North Atlantic. According to the GRU's information similar establishments have been set up in Antigua in the Azores, in Hofn and Keflavik in Iceland, in Hawaii and on Guam. The GRU's commanding officers are aware that their information about Brawdy may not be accurate. But the decision has been taken to attack and destroy the Brawdy monitoring station and all the others as well. The four attacking groups have been given the task of killing as many as possible of the technical staff of the station and of destroying as much as possible of the electronic apparatus, and everything that will burn must be burnt. Mines must be laid at the approaches to the building. All four groups can then depart in different directions.

The 'Shakespeare' group takes no part in the raid. Its task, beginning with the following night, is to lay the mines at the approaches to the building. Apart from that, with sniper fire and open attacks, the group has to make it difficult for anyone to attempt to save or restore the station. The group commander knows that the four neighbouring groups which are taking part in the attack are nearby and are doing the same. But the group commander does not know everything. He does not know that *spetsnaz* detachment 2-S-2, under the command of a major known as 'Uncle Kostya', has landed in the area of St David's. Detachment 2-S-2 consists of fifty-six men, fifteen lightweight motorcycles and six small cars with a considerable supply of ammunition. The detachment's task is to move rapidly, using secondary and forest roads and in some cases even the main roads, and reach

the Forest of Dean to organise a base there. The Forest of Dean is a wonderful place for *spetsnaz* operations. It is a hilly area covered with dense forest. At one time it was an important industrial region. There are still the remains of the abandoned coal mines and quarries and railway tunnels, although it is a long time since there was any railway there. Once firmly established in that forest 'Uncle Kostya' can strike out in any direction: nearby there is a nuclear power station, the Severn bridge, a railway tunnel beneath the river Severn, the port of Bristol, the GCHQ government communications centre at Cheltenham, very important military factories also at Bristol and a huge munitions dump at Welford. The GRU believes that it is somewhere in this area that the Royal Family would be sent in the event of war, and that would be a very important target.

The four *spetsnaz* groups which have taken part at the outset in the operation against Brawdy depart immediately after the attack and make their different ways to the Forest of Dean where they can join up with Uncle Kostya's detachment. Shakespeare knows nothing about this. The large-scale raid on Brawdy and Shakespeare's continued activity in the following days and nights ought to give the enemy the impression that this is one of the main areas of operation for *spetsnaz*.

Meanwhile *spetsnaz* group 2-C-41, of twelve men, has been landed at night near the port of Felixstowe from the catamaran *Double Star*. The boat is sailing under the Spanish flag. The group has left the catamaran in the open sea and swum ashore in aqualungs. There it has been met by a *spetsnaz* agent recruited some years previously. He has at the GRU's expense bought a small motorcycle shop, and his shop has always had available at least fifteen Japanese motorcycles all ready for the road, along with several sets of leather jackets, trousers and crash helmets. The group (containing some of the best motorcyclists in the Soviet Union) changes its clothes, its weapons are wrapped in tarpaulin, the *spetsnaz* agent and his family are killed and their bodies hidden in the cellar of their house, and the motorcycle gang then rushes off at a great speed along the A45 in the direction of Mildenhall. Its task is to set up automatic Strela-Blok anti-aircraft missiles in the area of the base and knock out one of the most important American air bases in Europe, used regularly by F-111s. Afterwards the group is to make for the nearest forest and link up with *spetsnaz* detachment 2-C-5.

The group commander does not know that at the same time and not far away from him ten other *spetsnaz* groups, each working independently, are carrying out similar operations against the American military bases at Woodbridge, Bentwaters and Lakenheath.

The motor yacht *Maria* was built in Italy. In the course of a decade she has changed owners several times and visited the oceans of the world until she was sold to some wealthy person, after which she has not been seen for several years in any port in the world. But when the international situation takes a turn for the worse the *Maria* appears in the North Sea sailing under a Swedish flag. After some modernisation the appearance of the yacht has changed somewhat. On receiving the signal '393939' the *Maria* travels at full speed towards the coast of Great Britain. When it is inside British territorial waters and within range of Fylingdales Moor the yacht's crew

removes hatch covers to reveal two BM-23 Katusha-like multi-barrelled missile-launchers. The sailors quickly aim the weapon at the gigantic spheres and fire. Seventy-two heavy shells explode around the installation, causing irreparable harm to the early warning system. The sailors on the yacht put on their aqualungs and jump overboard. For two hours the yacht drifts close to the shore without a crew. When the police clamber aboard, she explodes and sinks.

For operations against NATO forces in Central Europe the Soviet high command has concentrated an immensely powerful collection of forces consisting of the 1st and 2nd Western Fronts in East Germany, the 3rd Western Front in Poland, the Central Front in Czechoslovakia and the Group of Tank Armies in Belorussia. This makes fifteen armies altogether, including the six tank armies. On the right flank of this collection of forces there is the combined Baltic Fleet. And deep in Soviet territory another five fronts are being built up (fifteen armies altogether) for supporting attack.

On 12 August at 2300 hours *spetsnaz* battalions drawn from the seven armies of the first echelon cross the frontier of Western Germany on motorised hang-gliders, ordinary gliders and gliding parachutes. Operating in small groups, each battalion strikes at the enemy's radar installations, concentrating its efforts on a relatively narrow sector so as to create a sort of corridor for its planes to fly through. Apart from these seven corridors, another one of strategic importance is created. It was for this purpose that back in July the 13th *spetsnaz* brigade arrived in East Germany from the Moscow military district on the pretext that it was a military construction unit and based itself in the Thuringer Wald. The brigade is now split into sixty groups scattered about the forests of the Spessart and Odenwald hills, and faced with the task of destroying the anti-aircraft installations, especially the radar systems. In the first wave there are altogether 130 *spetsnaz* groups dropped with a total of some 3300 troops.

Two hours after the men have been dropped, the Soviet air force carries out a mass night raid on the enemy's anti-aircraft installations. The combined blow struck by the air force and *spetsnaz* makes it possible to clear one large and several smaller corridors through the anti-aircraft defence system. These corridors are used immediately for another mass air attack and a second drop of *spetsnaz* units.

Simultaneously, advance detachments of the seven armies cross the frontier and advance westwards.

At 0330 hours on 13 August the second wave of *spetsnaz* forces is dropped from Aeroflot aircraft operating at very low heights with heavy fighter cover.

The Central Front drops its *spetsnaz* brigade in the heavily wooded mountains near Freiburg. The brigade's job is to destroy the important American, West German and French headquarters, lines of communication, aircraft on the ground and anti-aircraft defences. This brigade is, so to speak, opening the gates into France, into which will soon burst several fronts and a further wave of *spetsnaz*.

The 1st and 2nd Western Fronts drop their *spetsnaz* brigades in Germany to the west of the Rhine. This part of West Germany is the furthest away

from the dangerous eastern neighbour and consequently all the most vulnerable targets are concentrated there: headquarters, command posts, aerodromes, nuclear weapon stores, colossal reserves of military equipment, ammunition and fuel.

The *spetsnaz* brigade of the 1st Western Front is dropped in the Aachen area. Here there are several large forests where bases can be organised and a number of very tempting targets: bridges across the Rhine which would be used for bringing up reserves and supplying the NATO forces fighting to the east of the Rhine, the important air bases of Bruggen and Wildenrath, the residence of the German government and West Germany's civil service in Bonn, important headquarters near München-Gladbach, and the Geilenkirchen air base where the E-3A early-warning aircraft are based. It is in this area that the Soviet high command plans to bring into the battle the 20th Guards Army, which is to strike southwards down the west bank of the Rhine. The *spetsnaz* brigade is busy clearing the way for the columns of tanks which are soon to appear here.

The *spetsnaz* brigade of the 2nd Western Front has been dropped in the Kaiserslautern area with the task of neutralising the important air base and the air force command posts near Ramstein and Zweibrücken and of destroying the nuclear weapons stores at Pirmasens. The place where the brigade has been dropped is where, according to the plan of the Soviet high command, the two arms of the gigantic pincer movement are to close together: the 20th Guards Army advancing from the north and the 8th Guards Tank Army striking from Czechoslovakia in the direction of Karlsruhe. After this the second strategic echelon will be brought into action to inflict a crushing defeat on France.

At the same time the Soviet high command understands that to win the war it has to prevent the large-scale transfer of American troops, arms and equipment to Western Europe. To solve the problem the huge Soviet Northern Fleet will have to be brought out into the Atlantic and be kept supplied there. The operations of the fleet will have to be backed up by the Air Force. But for the fleet to get out into the Atlantic it will have to pass through a long corridor between Norway and Greenland and Iceland. There the Soviet fleet will be exposed to constant observation and attack by air forces, small ships and submarines operating out of the fjords and by a huge collection of radio-electronic instruments and installations.

Norway, especially its southern part, is an exceptionally important area for the Soviet military leaders. They need to seize southern Norway and establish air and naval bases there in order to fight a battle for the Atlantic and therefore for Central Europe. The Soviet high command has allotted at least one entire front consisting of an airborne division, considerable naval forces and a brigade of *spetsnaz*. But airlifting ammunition, fuel, foodstuffs and reinforcements to the military, air and naval bases in Norway presents great problems of scale. So there have to be good and safe roads to the bases in southern Norway. Those roads lie in Sweden.

In the past Sweden was lucky: she always remained on the sidelines in a conflict. But at the end of the twentieth century the balance of the battlefield is changing. Sweden has become one of the most important strategic points in the world. If war breaks out the path of the aggressor will lie across Sweden. The occupation of Sweden is made easier by the fact that there are no nuclear weapons on its territory, so that the Soviet

leaders risk very little. They know, however, that the Swedish soldier is a very serious opponent -- thoughtful, disciplined, physically strong and tough, well armed, well acquainted with the territory he will have to fight over, and well trained for action in such terrain. The experience of the war against Finland teaches that in Scandinavia frontal attacks with tanks do not produce brilliant results. It requires the use of special tactics and special troops: *spetsnaz*.

And so it goes on, all over the world. In Sweden the capital city is reduced to a state of panic by the murder of several senior government figures and arson and bombing attacks on key buildings and ordinary civilians. In Japan, American nuclear bases are destroyed and chemical weapons used on the seat of government. In Pakistan, a breakaway movement in Baluchistan province, instantly recognised by the Soviet Communist Party, asks for and receives direct military intervention from the USSR to protect its fragile independence: Soviet-controlled territory extends all the way from Siberia through Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean.

It may not even need a third world war for the Soviet Union to occupy Baluchistan. The Red Army may be withdrawing from Afghanistan, but knowing what we know about Soviet strategy and the uses to which *spetsnaz* can be put, such a withdrawal can be seen as a useful public relations exercise without hindering the work of *spetsnaz* in any way. With a *spetsnaz* presence in Baluchistan, the Politburo could be reaching very close to the main oil artery of the world, to the Arab countries, to Eastern and Southern Africa, to Australia and South-east Asia: territories and oceans that are practically undefended.

APPENDICES

Appendix A-D Skipped (diagrams)

Appendix E

The part the Soviet athletes play

Below are a number of examples of the very close relationship between the sporting and military achievements of Soviet athletes.

Vladimir Myagkov. In the Soviet ski championships in 1939 Myagkov put up an exceptionally good time over the 20-kilometre distance, and became Soviet champion at that distance. During the war he was called into the Army and put in charge of a small unit of athletes which came directly under the Intelligence directorate of the front. He was later killed in fighting behind enemy lines. He was the first of the top Soviet athletes to be made a Hero of the Soviet Union, in his case posthumously. The tasks that Myagkov's sports unit was carrying out, the circumstances of his death and the act for which he was made a Hero remain a Soviet state secret to this day.

Porfiri Polosukhin. A Red Army officer before the war, he held world records at parachute jumping. He had been an instructor training special

troops for operations on enemy territory. During the war he continued to train parachutists for *spetsnaz* units of 'guard minelayers'. He was often behind the enemy's lines, and he developed a method of camouflaging airfields and of communicating with Soviet aircraft from secret partisan airfields. This original system operated until the end of the war and was never detected by the enemy, as a result of which connection by air with partisan units, especially with *spetsnaz* and *osnaz* units, was exceptionally reliable. After the war many a soldier from special troops trained by Polosukhin became world and European parachute champions.

Dmitri Kositsyn. Before the war he headed the skating department in one of the State Institutes of Physical Culture. It was supposed to be a civilian institute, but the teachers and many of the students had military rank. Kositsyn was a captain and had some notable achievements to his credit in sport, having established a number of Soviet records. During the war he commanded a special unit known as 'Black Death'. From that 'civilian' institute, in the first week of war alone, thirteen such units were formed. They engaged in active terrorist work in support of the Red Army, and the speed with which the units were formed suggests that long before the war all the members of the units had been carefully screened and trained. Otherwise they would not have been sent behind the lines. Kositsyn's unit acquired a name as the most daring and ruthless of all the formations on the Leningrad front.

Makhmud Umarov. During the Second World War Umarov was a soldier in an independent *spetsnaz* mine-laying battalion. He was several times dropped with a group of men behind enemy lines. He had two professions: he was a crack shot, and a doctor. After the war he was an officer in the Intelligence directorate of the Leningrad military district. He continued to have two professions, and as a doctor-psychiatrist he received an honorary doctorate for theoretical work. As a crack shot he became European and world champion; in fact, he was five times European champion and three times world champion. He won two Olympic silver medals for pistol shooting, in Melbourne and in Rome. After the resurrection of *spetsnaz* he served as an officer in that organisation, where both his professions were valued. Thanks to his sporting activities Lieutenant-Colonel Umarov visited many countries of the world and had extensive connections. In 1961 Makhmud Umarov suddenly disappeared from the medical and sporting scenes. There is some reason to believe that he died in very strange circumstances.

Yuri Borisovich Chesnokov. A man of unusual physical strength and endurance, he took part in many kinds of sport. He was particularly successful at volleyball: twice world champion and Olympic champion. Chesnokov's physical qualities were noticed very early and as soon as he finished school he was taken into the Academy of Military Engineering, although he was not an officer. From that time he was closely involved in the theory and practice of using explosives. Apart from an Olympic gold medal he has another gold medal for his work on the technique of causing explosions. Chesnokov is now a *spetsnaz* colonel.

Valentin Yakovlevich Kudrevatykh. He joined the para-military DOSAAF organisation when he was still at school. He took up parachute jumping, gliding and rifle shooting at the same time. In May 1956 he made his first parachute jump. Two years later, at the age of eighteen, he had reached a high level at parachute jumping and shooting. In 1959 he was called into the army, serving in the airborne forces. In 1961 he set five world records in

one week in parachute sport, for which he was promoted sergeant and sent to the airborne officers' school in Ryazan. After that he was sent to *spetsnaz* and put in command of some special women's units. He had under his command the most outstanding women athletes, including Antonina Kensitskaya, to whom he is now married. She has established thirteen world records, her husband fifteen. He made parachute jumps (often with a women's group) in the most incredible conditions, landing in the mountains, in forests, on the roofs of houses and so forth. Kudrevatykh took part in practically all the tests of new parachute equipment and weapons. Along with a group of professional women parachutists he took part in the experimental group drop from a critically low height on 1 March 1968. Then, as he was completing his 5,555th jump, he got into a critical situation. Black humour among Soviet airborne troops says that, if neither the main nor the reserve parachute opens, the parachutist still has a whole twenty seconds to learn to fly. Kudrevatykh did not learn to fly in those last seconds, but he managed with his body and the unopened parachutes to slow his fall. He spent more than two years in hospital and went through more than ten operations. When he was discharged he made his 5,556th jump. Many Soviet military papers published pictures of that jump. As usual Kudrevatykh jumped in the company of professional women parachutists. But there are no women in the Soviet airborne divisions. Only in *spetsnaz*.

After making that jump Kudrevatykh was promoted full colonel.

Appendix F

The Spetsnaz Intelligence Point (RP-SN)

Imagine that you have graduated from the 3rd faculty (operational intelligence) of the Military-Diplomatic Academy of the General Staff. If you have passed out successfully you will be sent to one of the twenty Intelligence directorates (RUs), which are to be found in the headquarters of military districts, groups of forces and fleets.

On the first day I spent at the Military-Diplomatic Academy I realised that diplomacy is espionage and that military diplomacy is military espionage. Successful completion of the 3rd faculty of the Military-Diplomatic Academy means serving in one of the Intelligence directorates, or in subordinate units directly connected with the recruitment of foreign agents and managing them.

Imagine you have been posted to the Intelligence Directorate of the Kiev military district. Kiev is without doubt the most beautiful city in the Soviet Union, and I have heard it said more than once by Western journalists who have visited Kiev that it is the most beautiful city in the world.

So you are now in the enormous building housing the headquarters of the Kiev military district. At different times all the outstanding military leaders of the Soviet Union have worked in this magnificent building: Zhukov, Bagramyan, Vatutin, Koshevoi, Chuikov, Kulikov, Yakubovsky and many others. The office of the officer commanding the district is on the second floor. To the right of his office are the massive doors to the Operational Directorate. To the left are the no less massive doors to the Intelligence Directorate. It is a symbolic placing: the first directorate (battle

planning) is the commanding officer's right hand, while the second directorate (*razvedka*) is his left. There are many other directorates and departments in the headquarters, but they are all on other floors.

Your first visit to the Intelligence Directorate at the district headquarters takes place, of course, in the company of one of the officers. Otherwise you would simply not be admitted.

Before entering the headquarters you must call at the permit office and produce your authority. You are given a number to phone and an officer comes to escort you. The permit office examines your documents very carefully and issues you with a temporary pass. The officer then leads you along endless corridors and up numerous stairs. You must be ready at every turn to produce your permit and officer's identity card. Your documents are checked many times before you reach the district's head of *razvedka*.

Now you are in the general's huge office. Facing you is a major-general, the head of *razvedka* for the Kiev military district. You introduce yourself to him: 'Comrade general, Captain so-and-so reporting for further duty.'

The general asks you a few questions, and as he talks with you about trivialities he decides your fate. There are a number of possibilities. Perhaps he doesn't take to you and so decides not to take you on. You will be posted to the district Personnel Directorate and will never again have anything to do with Intelligence work. Or he may like you but not very much. In that case he will send you for reconnaissance work on lower floors to serve in a division or regiment. You will be working in *razvedka*, but not with the agent network.

If you really please him several paths will be open to you. The *razvedka* of a military district is a gigantic organisation with a great deal of work to do. Firstly, he can post you to the headquarters of one of three armies to work in the headquarters Intelligence department, where you will be sent on to an intelligence post (RP) to recruit secret agent-informers to work for that army.

Secondly, he can leave you in the Intelligence directorate for work in the second (agent network) or the third (*spetsnaz*) department. Thirdly, he can post you to one of the places where the recruitment of foreigners to work for the Kiev military district is actually taking place. There are two such places: the Intelligence centre (RZs) and the *spetsnaz* Intelligence point (RP *spetsnaz*).

The general may ask you for your own opinion. Your reply must be short: for example -- I don't mind where I work, so long as it is not at headquarters, preferably at recruitment. The general expects that sort of reply from you. Intelligence has no need of an officer who is not bursting to do recruiting work. If someone has got into Intelligence work but is not burning with desire to recruit foreigners, it means he has made a mistake in his choice of profession. It also means that the people who recommended him for Intelligence work and spent years training him at the Military-Diplomatic Academy were also mistaken.

The general asks his final question: what kind of agents do you want to recruit -- for providing information or for collaborating with *spetsnaz*? Every intelligence officer at the front and fleet level must know how to recruit agents of both kinds. It is, you say, all the same to you.

'All right,' the general says, 'I am appointing you an officer in the *spetsnaz* Intelligence point of the 3rd department of the Second Directorate

of the headquarters of the Kiev military district. The order will be issued in writing tomorrow. I wish you well.'

You thank the general for the trust placed in you, salute smartly, click your heels, and leave the office. The escorting officer awaits you at the exit. From here, without any permits, you come out into a little courtyard, where there is always a little prison van waiting. The door slams behind you and you are in a mousetrap. Facing you is a little opaque window with a strong grille over it. No use trying to look out. The van twists and turns round the city's streets, often stopping and changing direction, and you realise that it is stopping at traffic lights. At last the van drives through some huge gates and comes to a halt. The door is opened and you step out into the courtyard of the penal battalion of the Kiev military district. It is a military prison. Welcome to your new place of work.

The ancient city of Kiev has seen conquerors from all over the world pass down its streets. Some of them razed the city to the ground; others fortified it; then a third lot destroyed it again. The fortifications around the ruined and burnt-out city of Kiev were built for the last time in 1943 on Hitler's orders. On the approaches to Kiev you can come across fortifications of all ages, from the concrete pillboxes of the twentieth century to the ruins of walls that were built five hundred years before the arrival of Batu Khan.

The place you have been brought to is a fort built at the time of Catherine the Great. It is built on the south-west approaches to the city at the top of steep cliffs covered with ancient oaks. Alongside are other forts, an enormous ancient monastery, and an ancient fortress which now houses a military hospital.

Through the centuries military installations of the most varied kinds -- stores, barracks, headquarters -- have been built on the most dangerous approaches to the city and, apart from the basic purpose, they have also served as fortifications. The fort we have come to also served two purposes: as a barracks for 500 to 700 soldiers, and as a fort. Circular in shape, its outside walls used to have only narrow slits and broad embrasures for guns. These have now all been filled in and the only remaining windows are those that look into the internal courtyard. The fort has only one gateway, a well-defended tunnel through the mighty walls. A brick wall has been added around the fort. From the outside it looks like a high brick wall in a narrow lane, with yet another brick wall, higher than the first one, behind it.

Both the inner and outer courtyards of the fort are split up into numerous sectors and little yards divided by smaller walls and a whole jungle of barbed wire. The sectors have their own strange labels: the numbering has been so devised that no one should be able to discern any logic in it. The absence of any system facilitates the secrecy surrounding the establishment.

There are three companies of men undergoing punishment and one guard company in the penal battalion. The men in the guard company have only a very vague idea of who visits the battalion and why. They have only their instructions which have to be carried out: the men undergoing punishment can be only in the inner courtyard in certain sectors; officers who have a

triangle stamped in their passes are allowed into certain other sectors; officers with a little star stamped in their passes are allowed to enter other sectors; and so forth.

Apart from the officers of the penal battalion, frequent callers at the fort are officers of the military prosecutor's office, the military commandant of the city, and officers of the commandant's office: investigators, lawyers. And there is a sector set aside for you. The *spetsnaz* intelligence point has no connection at all with the penal battalion. But if it were to be situated separately in some building, sooner or later people in the vicinity would be struck by the suspicious behaviour of the people occupying the building. Here in the penal battalion you are hidden from curious eyes.

The *spetsnaz* intelligence point is a small military unit headed by a lieutenant-colonel, who has under him a number of officers, graduates from the Military-Diplomatic Academy, and a few sergeants and privates who carry out support functions without having any idea (or the correct idea) of what the officers are engaged on. Officers of the penal battalion and those visiting the battalion are not supposed to ask what goes on in your sector. Many years back one of your predecessors appeared to allow himself the luxury of 'careless talk', to the effect that his was a group reporting directly to the officer commanding the district and investigating cases of corruption among the senior officers. This is sufficient to ensure that you are treated with respect and not asked any more questions.

Its location in the penal battalion gives the *spetsnaz* point a lot of advantages: behind such enormous walls, the command can be sure that your documents will not get burnt or lost by accident; it is under the strictest guard, with dozens of guard dogs and machine-guns mounted in towers to preserve your peace of mind; no outsider interested in what is going on inside the walls will ever get a straight answer; the independent organisation does not attract the attention of higher-ranking Soviet military leaders who are not supposed to know about GRU and *spetsnaz*; and even if an outsider knows something about you he cannot distinguish *spetsnaz* officers from among the other officers visiting the old fort.

Spetsnaz has at its disposal a number of prison vans exactly the same as those belonging to the penal battalion and with similar numbers. They are very convenient for bringing any person of interest to us into or out of your fort at any time. What is good about the prison van is that neither the visitor nor outsiders can work out exactly where the *spetsnaz* point is. A visitor can be invited to any well guarded place where there are usually plenty of people (the headquarters, commandant's office, police station) and then secretly brought in a closed van to the old fort, and returned in the same way so that he gets lost in the crowd. Fortunately there are several such forts in the district.

A penal battalion, that is to say a military prison, is a favourite place for the GRU to hide its branches in. There are other kinds of camouflage as well -- design bureaux, missiles bases, signals centres -- but they all have one feature in common: a small, secret organisation is concealed within a large, carefully guarded military establishment.

In addition to its main premises where the safes crammed with secret papers are kept, the *spetsnaz* Intelligence point has several secret apartments and small houses on the outskirts of the city.

Having found yourself in the place I have described, you are met by an

unhappy-looking lieutenant-colonel who has probably spent his whole working life at this work. He gives you a brief order: 'You wear uniform only inside the fort and if you are called to the district headquarters. The rest of the time you wear civilian clothes.'

'I understand, comrade lieutenant-colonel.'

'But there's nothing for you to do here in the fort and even less in the headquarters. This is my place, not yours. I don't need any bureaucrats; I need hunters. Go off and come back in a month's time with material on a good foreign catch.'

'Very well.'

'Do you know the territories our district will be fighting on in a war?'

'Yes, I do.'

'Well, I need another agent there who could meet up with a *spetsnaz* group in any circumstances. I am giving you a month because you are just beginning your service, but the time-scale will be stricter later on. Off you go, and remember that you have got a lot of rivals in Kiev: the friends of yours who have already joined the Intelligence point are probably active in the city, the KGB is also busy, and goodness knows who else is recruiting here. And remember -- you can slip up only once in our business. I shall never overlook a mistake, and neither will *spetsnaz*. In wartime you are shot for making a mistake. In peacetime you land in prison. You know which prison?'

That was what Kiev was like before the Chernobyl disaster. For hundreds of years barbarians from many of the countries of Asia and Europe had been doing their best to destroy my great city, but nobody inflicted such damage on it as did the Communists. The history of nuclear energy in the Soviet Union is one -- very long -- story of crime. The founding father of the development of nuclear energy was Lavrenti Beria, the all-powerful chief of the secret police and, as later became apparent, one of the greatest criminals of the twentieth century. The majority of the Soviet ministers, designers and engineers connected with the development of nuclear energy were kept in prisons, and not only in Stalin's time. All nuclear plants are built with prison labour. I have personally seen thousands of convicts working in the uranium mines in the Kirovograd region. (See V. Suvorov, *Aquarium*). The convicts have no incentive whatsoever to turn out good quality work.

Sooner or later this was bound to end in disaster. The paper *Literaturnaya Ukraina*¹ reported on the criminal attitude to construction work and the use of defective materials and obsolete technology at Chernobyl. The paper issued a warning that several generations of people would have to pay for the irresponsible attitude of the people in charge of the building work. But nobody paid any attention to this article or others like it; a month later the catastrophe took place.

¹ 27 March 1986.

Viktor Suvorov

[illegible]

To the memory of Oleg Vladimirovich Penkovsky

Introduction

There is but one opinion as to which country in the world possesses the most powerful secret intelligence service. Without the slightest doubt that country is the Soviet Union, and the name of the monstrous secret organisation without precedent in the history of mankind is the KGB. But on the question as to which country possesses the second most powerful secret organisation, the opinions of specialists differ. Strange as it may seem, the country to which this organisation belongs is also the Soviet Union, and the organisation itself is called the Chief Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff.

This book was written in order to confirm this simple fact.

At first it was conceived as an instructional manual for a narrow circle of specialists. Subsequently it was revised by the author for a wider public. The revision was confined mainly to the excision of certain definitions and technical details which would be of little interest. Even after this, there remained in the book many details of a technical nature, which may sometimes make for difficult reading. But though I may apologise, there is nothing to be done. In order to understand a disease (and the desire to understand a disease implies a desire to fight against it), one must know its pathology as well as its symptoms.

For one of their very first chosen myths, the communists decided to record that the organs of enforcement of the new State were not created until the nineteenth of December 1917. This falsehood was circulated in order to prove that Soviet power, in the first forty-one days of its existence, could dispense with the mass executions so familiar to other revolutions. The falsehood is easily exposed. It is sufficient to look at the editions of the Bolshevik papers for those days which shook the world. The Organs and subsequent mass executions existed from the first hour, the first minute, the first infantile wail of this Soviet power. That first night, having announced to the world the birth of the most bloodthirsty dictatorship in its history, Lenin appointed its leaders. Among them was comrade A. I. Rikov, the head of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs which sounds less innocuous in its abbreviation, NKVD. Comrade Rikov was later shot, but not before he had managed to write into the history of the Organs certain bloody pages which the Soviet leadership would prefer to forget about. Fifteen men have been appointed to the post of Head of the Organs, of which three were hounded out of the Soviet government with ignominy. One died at his post. One was secretly destroyed by members of the Soviet government (as was later publicly admitted). Seven comrades were shot or hanged, and tortured with great refinement before their official punishment. We are not going to guess about the futures of three still living who have occupied the post. The fate of the deputy heads has been equally violent, even after the death of comrade Stalin.

The paradox of this endless bloody orgy would seem to be this. Why does the most powerful criminal organisation in the world so easily and freely give up its leaders to be torn to pieces? How is the Politburo able to deal with them so unceremoniously, clearly not experiencing the slightest fear before these seemingly all-powerful personalities and the organisations headed by them? How is it that the Politburo has practically no difficulties in displacing not only individual heads of State Security but in destroying whole flocks of the most influential State Security officers? Where lies the secret of this limitless power of the Politburo?

The answer is very simple. The method is an old one and has been used successfully for thousands of years. It boils down to the principle: 'divide and rule'. In the beginning, in order to rule, Lenin divided everything in Russia that was capable of being divided, and ever since the communists have continued faithfully to carry out the instructions of the great founder of the first proletarian state.

Each system of governing the State is duplicated and reduplicated. Soviet power itself is duplicated. If one visits any regional committee of the Party and then the Regional Executive Committee one is struck by the fact that two separate organizations having almost identical structures and deciding identical problems nevertheless take completely contradictory decisions. Neither one of these organisations has the authority to decide anything independently.

This same system exists at all stages and at all levels of the Government. If we look at the really important decisions of the Soviet leadership, those which are published in the papers, we will find that any one of them is taken only at joint sessions of the Central Committee of the Party and the Council of Ministers. I have in front of me as I write the last joint resolution on raising the quality and widening the range of production of children's toys. Neither the Council of Ministers of the gigantic State structure nor the Central Committee of the ruling Party is able, since neither has the power and authority, to take an independent decision on such an important matter. But we are not talking here just about Ministers and First Secretaries. At all lower levels the same procedure is to be observed. For example, only a joint decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of a republic and the Council of Ministers of the same republic, or the Provincial Committee and the Provincial Executive Committee, is valid. At these levels of course, such crucial problems as the quality of children's toys are not decided; but the principle remains that no separate and independent decisions can be taken. In shape and form, Soviet power is everywhere duplicated, from the planning of rocket launchings into space to the organisation for the burial of Soviet citizens, from the management of diplomatic missions abroad to lunatic asylums, from the construction of sewers to atomic ice-breakers.

In addition to the governing organs which give orders and see that they are carried out, there also exist Central Control Organs which are independent of the local authority. The basic one of these is of course the KGB, but independently of the KGB other powerful organs are also active: the innocent-sounding People's Control for example, a secret police organisation subordinated to a Politburo member who exercises almost as much influence as the Chief of the KGB. In addition to the People's Control, the Ministry of the Interior is also active and this is subordinated neither to the KGB nor to Control. There is also the Central Organ of the press, a visit of which to a factory or workshop causes hardly less anger than a visit of the OBHSS, the socialist fraud squad. On the initiative of Lenin, it was seen as essential that each powerful organ or organisation which is capable of taking independent decisions be counter-balanced by the existence of another no less powerful bureaucratic organisation. The thinking goes: we have a newspaper Pravda, let's have another on a similar scale — Izvestia. Tass created, as a counter-balance to it, APN. Not for competition but simply for duplication. In this way the comrades in the Politburo are able to live a quieter life. To control everybody and everything is absolutely impossible, and this is why duplication exists. Everybody jealously pursues his rival and in good time informs whoever he should inform of any flashes of inspiration, of any deviation from the established norm, any effort to look at what is going on from the standpoint of a healthy critical mind. Duplication in everything is the prime principle and reason behind the terrifying stagnation of all walks of life in Soviet society. It is also the reason for the unprecedented stability of the regime. In

duplicating the Organs, the Politburo was able to neutralise any attempt by them to raise the standard of revolt against their creators, and thus it has always been.

The creation of a system of parallel institutions began with the creation of the Tcheka, an organisation called into existence to counter-balance the already growing powers of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs. During the course of the whole of the civil war these two bloody organisations existed independently, and as rivals, of each other. Their influence grew to immense proportions, and Lenin suggested the creation of yet another independent organ to carry out the task of control and retribution, the Rabkrin. This organ, known today as the People's Control, is still waiting for somebody to research into its history. The Rabkrin was Lenin's love-child, remembered by him even on his deathbed. The Rabkrin or, more formally, the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate was not created as an organ of repression for the whole population, but as an organisation for the control of the ruling Bolshevik elite and, above all, the Tcheka and the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs.

In the meantime the tentacles of the Tcheka had spread out over the frontiers and the Bolshevik leaders were forced to create yet another parallel organisation to the Tcheka, capable of counterbalancing its external activities. Neither the People's Commissariat nor the Rabkrin was able to fulfill this role. On the personal order of the indefatigable Lenin on 21 October 1918, an external intelligence service, completely independent of the Tcheka, was created under the meaningless title of the Registered Directorate of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. At the present time it is called the Chief Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Soviet Army, and also known by its military classification as 'unit 44388'. In history there is a number of examples of similar organisations within repressive regimes. The most obvious of these is of course Hitler's Germany. The SS and the SA and, on the front, the Wehrmacht Divisions and the Divisions of the SS, all existed under the same duplication principle, as did the two Intelligence Services, the Gestapo and the Abwehr.

This multiplication of institutions can only be explained by the desire of the ruling class to guarantee the stability of its regime. It is important to clarify this, so that one can understand the role of Soviet military intelligence in Soviet society and in the international arena, and, in addition, the reason why this organisation has remained throughout Soviet history largely independent from the KGB, in spite of the many ordeals it has been subjected to.

PART ONE

Chapter One The Triumvirate

The Party, the KGB and the Army form the triumvirate which rules the Soviet Union. All other institutions and organisations, including those which appear officially to wield State power, occupy a subordinate position. But no single one of the three holds absolute power. They are all interdependent and have to share power with their rivals. There is a constant underlying struggle between these three forces, with attacks and retreats, bloody skirmishes, victories, defeats, armistices, secret alliances and permanent treachery.

The Party cannot exist without a continuous repression of the people, in other words without the KGB. The KGB in turn cannot exist without a continuous fanning of the flames of communist fanaticism and the deception of the people, in other words

without the Party. Each of the two considers its own function to be the important one and the function of its rival merely supplementary. Thus the Party and the KGB are striving for undivided rule, but with this in mind each understands that it is not possible to kill off its rival. Too much depends on the continued existence of that rival. Both the Party and the KGB need the Army, which plays the part of a performing crocodile, ensuring a quiet life for the other two. In the triumvirate system the Army is the most powerful element but it is also the most deprived as regards its rights. Unlike the Party and the KGB, the Army has never played the leading role in the trio. Should this ever happen, the Party and the KGB would be swiftly destroyed. The fact is that this crocodile does not need either the Party or the KGB. Its natural state is a free life in a swamp, enjoying the ability to gobble up whatever it wishes. Both the Party and the KGB are Perfectly well aware that they, in the role of trainers of the performing crocodile, would be its first victims should the crocodile ever be set at liberty. So why has the crocodile never gobbled up its trainers?

The Party and the KGB hold the crocodile firmly in check by means of two strong leashes. The Party leash is called the Political Department, that of the KGB the Special Department. Every organ of the Army is penetrated by the Political Department of the Party and the Special Department of the KGB. On those occasions when the Army has attacked the Party, which has happened several times, beginning with the military opposition of the twenties, the Tchekists of the KGB have come into action and quickly gained control over dissident elements in the Army. When the Army has attacked the KGB, as happened after the death of Stalin, the Party has gone into action against it. And at times when the KGB has been plotting against the Party, the Party has invariably allowed the crocodile to take a bite at the Tchekists, but not a bite to the death. After such incidents the situation has returned to normal -the crocodile's trainers have manipulated their leashes in such a way and from different sides that it is impossible for any quarrel to have a conclusion. They have even been able to give the crocodile a few kicks and, if necessary, to direct it to another side, as it is said 'against any aggressor'. Its dependent situation notwithstanding, the Army is sufficiently strong sometimes to pull its two trainers after it. Thus it is not possible for the Army to be left out of the triumvirate. None of the remaining inhabitants of the Soviet Union has any independent part to play in the concert. They fulfil an auxiliary role. They supply food to the trainers and the crocodile, put on their make-up for the show, announce the different acts and collect money from the terrified spectators.

The general staff of the Soviet Army is the brain of the crocodile, and military intelligence is its eyes and ears. The GRU is a part of the general staff, in other words a part of the brain. In fact it is that part which analyses what the eyes see and the ears hear, the part which concentrates the unblinking eyes of the crocodile onto the most interesting targets and trains its ears to hear with precision every rustle of the night. Although the crocodile is firmly tied to the Party and the KGB, the general staff and the integral GRU are practically independent of external control. Why this should be is explained by the Party's experience. In the period before the war, the Party supervised the general staff so carefully, and the Tchekists insisted strongly on the observance of every minute directive of the Party, that the general staff completely lost the ability to think independently. As a result the crocodile, despite its enormous size, completely lost its presence of mind, its speed of reaction and any capability to think and take independent decisions. All this brought the system to the edge of catastrophe, as the Army became practically incapable of fighting. The Party learnt from this sad experience and realised that it must not interfere in the working of the crocodile's brain, even if this brain had ceased to think along Party lines. The Party and the KGB preferred, for purely practical reasons, to keep only the body of the

crocodile under control and not to interfere with the work of its brain, of its sharp ears and piercing eyes.

Chapter Two

History

Soviet military intelligence [The Russian version of the English 'intelligence' — *razvedka* — has wider significance and includes everything we understand by the terms 'intelligence', 'reconnaissance', 'surveillance' and all activity governing collection and processing of information about actual or potential enemies.] and its superior organ, the GRU, are an integral part of the Army. The history of Soviet intelligence can therefore only be surveyed in the light of the history of the development of the Army and consequently in the light of the continuous struggle between the Army, the Party and the KGB. From the moment of the creation of the first detachment of the Red Army, small intelligence groups were formed within these detachments quietly and often without any order from above. As the regular army developed into newly-formed regiments, brigades, divisions, army corps and armies, so these intelligence organs developed with it. From the outset, intelligence units at all levels were subordinated to the corresponding staffs. At the same time the superior echelons of intelligence exercised control and direction of the lower echelons. The chief of intelligence of an army corps, for example, had his own personal intelligence unit and in addition directed the chiefs of intelligence of the divisions which formed a part of his army corps. Each divisional intelligence chief, in his turn, had his own intelligence unit at the same time as directing the activities of the intelligence chiefs of the brigades which formed his division. And so on down the scale. On 13 June 1918 a front was formed, for the first time in the composition of the Red Army. This front received the name of the Eastern Front, and in it there were five armies and the Volga military flotilla. On the same day there was created a 'registrational' (intelligence) department in the Eastern Front. The department had the intelligence chiefs of all five armies and the flotilla reporting to it. These intelligence chiefs of the front possessed a number of aircraft for aerial reconnaissance, some cavalry squadrons and, most important, an agent network. The agent network for the Eastern Front was first formed on the basis of underground organisations of Bolsheviks and other parties which supported them. Subsequently the network grew and, during the advances of the Eastern Front in the Urals and in Siberia, agent groups and organisations intervened in the rear of the enemy before the main forces attacked. Subsequent to the formation of the Eastern Front, new fronts were added to the Red Army: the Southern, Ukrainian, Northern, Turkistan and, later, Caucasian, Western, South- Eastern, North-Eastern and others. The intelligence set-up for each front was organised in the same way as that for the Eastern Front. There were also some independent and separate armies which did not form part of the fronts, and these, as a rule, had their own independent networks.

In the spring of 1918, besides the agent, aerial and other types of intelligence services, the diversionary intelligence service came into being. These diversionary detachments reported to the intelligence chiefs of fronts, armies, corps and sometimes divisions, and were called the 'cavalry of special assignments'. Formed from the best cavalymen in the Army, they dressed in the uniform of the enemy and were used to carry out deep raids in the enemy's rear, to take prisoners — especially staff officers — to collect information on enemy positions and activities and to undermine and sometimes physically destroy the enemy's command structure. The number of these diversionary units and their numerical strength constantly increased.

In 1920, on the Polish Front, on the staff of the Soviet forces, there was a separate cavalry brigade for 'special assignments' with a strength of more than two thousand cavalymen, and this was on top of several regiments and separate squadrons. All these units were dressed in Polish uniform. Much later these diversionary units received the name Spetsnaz, now given to all special forces of the GRU.

>From its inception, military intelligence suffered the greatest Possible antagonism from the Tchekists. The Tcheka had its own central agent network and an agent network in local areas. The Tchekists jealously guarded their right to have secret agents and could not resign themselves to the idea that anyone else was operating similar secret networks. The Tcheka also had units of 'special assignments' which carried out raids, not in the enemy's rear, but in its own rear, destroying those who were dissatisfied with the communist order.

During the civil war the Tcheka strove to unite all special assignment units under its own control. Several cases are recorded of the Tchekists trying to take over organs of military intelligence. One such attempt occurred on 10 July 1918 when the Tcheka shot the whole staff of the Eastern Front intelligence department, which had been in existence for only twenty- seven days, together with the entire staff of the front and the commander himself, M. A. Muravev, who had been trying to intervene in favour of his intelligence department. The whole of the agent system of military intelligence passed into the control of the Tchekists, but this brought the front to the very edge of catastrophe. The new commander, I. I. Vatsetis, and his chief of staff had no intelligence service of their own, and were unable to ask for the necessary information. They could only request information in a very tactful way, being well aware of the Tcheka's attitude to those it disliked. (As regards Vatsetis the Tchekists did indeed shoot him, but much later.)

Naturally while the agent network was under the control of the Tcheka, its own work was given priority, and any tasks set it by the Army Command were given very low priority. This of course brought the forces very near to complete defeat. If the army intelligence service is separated from the army staff, then the brain becomes nothing more than the brain of a blind and deaf man. Even if the blind man receives essential information from one source or another, his reaction will still be slow and his movements imprecise. The leader of the Red Army, Trotsky, placed an ultimatum before Lenin: either give me an independent military intelligence service or let Dzerzhinsky lead the Army with his Tchekists.

Lenin knew what the Tcheka was capable of but he also knew that its capabilities were extremely one-sided. He therefore ordered Dzerzhinsky not to interfere in matters of military intelligence. In spite of this, the Tcheka's attempts to swallow up military intelligence went on, and these efforts still continue on a reduced scale up to the present day.

Towards the end of 1918 the organisation of military intelligence from regimental staff level up to the level of front staff had been virtually completed. There remained only one staff which as deprived of its own intelligence service of the Republic, the staff of the Red Army (at that time called the Field Staff, later the General Staff). For this reason the general staff remained blind and deaf, obtaining information indispensable to its work at second or third-hand. In addition to this, the absence of a superior intelligence organ meant a complete lack of co-ordination of the front intelligence services. Military intelligence had acquired a pyramid structure, but the top of the pyramid was missing. The Chief of the Army and in charge of all military production, Leon Trotsky several times approached Lenin with the demand that he should create such a superior military intelligence organ. Understanding the necessity for the creation of such an organ, but realising that this would inevitably mean a strengthening of the position of Trotsky, Lenin prevaricated and repeatedly refused

Trotsky's suggestion. At the beginning of autumn, the position of the communists worsened sharply. Production, fuel and political crises became more acute. Armed uprisings were taking place against the communists. There was an attempt on the life of Lenin himself. In order to save the regime the communists decided on a desperate measure. In each town and village they would take hostages and, in the case of the slightest manifestation of discontent among the inhabitants, these hostages would be shot. The Soviet state was saved, by mass executions. Then another problem arose. The Tcheka, released from its restraints and drunk with blood, got out of control. In Tver and Torzhok the Tchekists, together with the hostages, destroyed communist leaders who displeased them. One threat to the stability of the state had been replaced by another, far worse. Lenin, not yet completely recovered, immediately resumed day-to-day leadership. Without restricting the terror, he took a number of steps to control it. The most important of his decisions were, firstly, to give to the People's Commissariats (i.e. the ministries), the provincial and town committees the right to take part in court cases against arrested communists. A communist would be declared not guilty if two members of the Party Committee testified in his favour. Secondly, Lenin directed his attention to the annulment of the Tcheka's monopoly of secret activity. He finally accepted Trotsky's proposal and on 21 October 1918 signed a decree, creating a superior organ of Soviet military intelligence which was to be called the Registrational Directorate of the Field Staff of the Republic.

The newly created directorate did not increase or decrease the importance of the front and army intelligence services, it merely co-ordinated them. But at this time the directorate began the creation of a new network of agents which could be active in countries all over the world, including those where the front networks already had active agents. The organisation created in 1918 has, in principle, survived to the present day. Certainly the founding rules are fully applicable to our own time. These are, firstly, that each military staff must have its own independent intelligence set-up. Secondly, the intelligence set-up of subordinate staffs is to be fully under the command of the intelligence of superior formations. Thirdly, the agent network must be part of the composition of the general staff intelligence network and part of the composition of the front and fleet intelligence services. (In peace-time this means military districts and groups of forces.) Fourthly, diversionary intelligence is subsidiary to agent intelligence. It must be found on front or fleet level, military districts and groups of forces and also at the level of armies and flotillas. And, fifthly and most importantly, military intelligence must be quite separate from the organs of enforcement and their intelligence services. Since 1918, each one of these rules has been broken at least once, if not more often, but invariably the mistake has been summarily corrected.

The creation of the GRU [The GRU, like the KGB, has been through several name changes in its history; at this time it was called 'Registraupr', later 'Razvedupr'. For our present purposes the name GRU will be used consistently.] was not only an act of self-preservation on Lenin's part from the ravages of the Tcheka, but also a concession to Trotsky. Having entrusted this weapon to Trotsky and the Army, Lenin was careful to equip it with a safety device by the name of Simon Ivanovich Aralov, who came from the V. Tcheka. On becoming chief of the registrational directorate, Aralov formally remained a member of the collegium of the Tcheka. This step was taken in the interests of subterfuge, and even up to the present day has confused many researchers. Remaining formally within the Tcheka, Aralov, from the first day of his work in military intelligence, had to become a rival and consequently enemy of the Tchekists. This had entered into Lenin's calculations; he had not been slow to see that it would be impossible for Aralov to avoid daily skirmishes with the Tchekists on the most mundane questions, and that this would inevitably lead to a confrontation which

would preclude any possibility of Aralov being exploited as a trusted Tchekist. But this was not all. In the case of any agreement with the Army, not one of the Army's chiefs would dare to trust Aralov. The GRU would be a part of the Army but the Army would not be able to make use of the GRU in the struggle against the Party and the Tcheka.

Lenin's calculations proved themselves sound remarkably quickly. In the spring of 1919 the reinforced army under Trotsky's leadership openly came out against the Party's meddling in the affairs of the Army. A united group of Army delegates, the so-called 'Military Opposition', at the eighth congress of the Party in March 1919, demanded de facto independence of the Army from Party influences. At that time it was still permitted to express personal opinions at party conferences, and more than 100 delegates out of 269 declared themselves in favour of the military programme. There were widespread abstentions and the Party and the Tcheka found themselves in a minority at their own conference.

Only a few votes were necessary to secure the complete and legal victory of the Army, but at this point the delegates from the military intelligence service, knowing the heavy hand of Aralov, maintained an icy silence and strict neutrality. Then at the most dramatic moment of the session Aralov spoke critically of the military opposition, after which the delegates of the military intelligence service with one voice supported the Party. The number of supporters of the military opposition shrank to ninety-five, a clear defeat. The session closed with a victory for the Party. The military opposition crumbled and many of its members never again took any action against the Party. The Army had learnt a lesson. In the struggle against the Party, never count on the support of the military intelligence service. Emboldened by victory, the Tcheka renewed its penetration of the Army. Many unrepentant members of the military opposition were arrested and shot. The humiliation of the Army inevitably affected military intelligence too, and on 13 May 1919 the Tchekists executed members of the staff of military intelligence in the 7th Army who had displeased them. Military intelligence naturally objected sharply to the Tcheka's taking the law into its own hands, and from that time on it was its sworn enemy. Lenin was delighted. Military intelligence henceforth was an inseparable part of the Army, but its chief was the personal enemy of both the Army and the Tcheka. Another unwritten rule was established in the organisation of the GRU, too, which was that the chief of the GRU must be appointed only from among the senior officials of the Tcheka secret police (historically known as the V. Tcheka, GPU, OGPU, NKVD, NKGB, MGB, MVD and KGB and unofficially as 'the Organs'). This rule has also been broken several times, but the Party has always been able to correct its mistake in time.

The agent network of the GRU was reinforced at almost lightning speed. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, inside Russia after the Revolution, in her central provinces alone, there were more than four million foreigners: Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, Poles, Slovaks, Czechs, Koreans, Bulgars, Serbs, Croats and others. Most of them were former prisoners of war. More than three hundred thousand of them voluntarily enlisted in the Red Army. There was no need to recruit such people. The overwhelming majority of them were convinced, fanatical communists. Military intelligence simply sent them off to their own countries as GRU agents. Secondly, after the Revolution Moscow became the Mecca of communism, and after the foundation of the Comintern, communists from all countries flocked to Moscow. The Comintern openly declared as its aim the destruction of capitalism, and in this manifesto it was helped from all sides, the Tcheka and the GRU in particular developing their espionage activities. On the orders of the Comintern [The Communist International, grouping together the communist parties of the world and declaring itself as 'the headquarters of the worldwide communist revolution'.], thousands of communists spread into foreign states worldwide under the control of the Soviet intelligence organisations.

Some of these, like the German communists Richard Sorge and Karl Ramm, the Finnish communist Otto Kusinien, the Hungarian Sandor Rado, are now well known to history, but thousands more remained unknown, activists labouring strenuously to fulfil the will of Soviet intelligence. Thirdly, after the Revolution millions of emigres appeared from Russia, all over the world. Any Soviet intelligence officer who had undergone the most elementary linguistic training could move about freely from country to country without attracting the slightest suspicion.

External circumstances favoured communism too. After the First World War the world veered sharply towards communist doctrines. Communist parties were strong and united. In Germany and Hungary there were communist revolutions. The heat of the conflagration was felt in Spain, France and China. Soviet intelligence skilfully exploited the situation which was unfolding. The First World War also left behind a legacy of despair — the world had given way and there were many people who had lost their hopes and ideals. Embittered and depressed, their recruitment presented no difficulty whatsoever. In one of the early GRU instruction manuals there is the following advice: 'If you need a facilities agent (a radio operator, owner of a safe house or transmission point) find a tall handsome man who has lost a leg or an arm in the war.'

One last, but by no means negligible factor, is that Russia has always possessed too much gold. After the Revolution, mountains of gold from millions of people killed in the torture chambers of Soviet power were added to the State Treasury. In addition to this, communists plundered churches all over Russia which from ancient times had been famous for their wealth. Great profit was harvested from the domes of the richest cathedrals, for these were roofed with solid gold. In looting the churches, the communists said, 'For the needs of the world revolution.' What they meant was, 'For the needs of espionage.'

There were many elementary errors and failures in the work of these early field officers who had no experience whatsoever. For example, the counter-intelligence officers of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, which at the time were independent states, simply told any suspicious person who claimed to be a fugitive Russian officer, or engineer or doctor, to tie a necktie. In 1920, by this method alone, more than forty GRU agents were unmasked in these three small countries. The GRU was unperturbed by these failures, however, its philosophy being that if it could not have quality it would go for quantity. It was an astute calculation. If one agent in a hundred sent abroad showed himself to be talented, and his natural talent made up for his lack of education, then that was enough. Nobody was worried about the agents who were discovered. Let them get out of the mess if they could. The Soviet Union will never admit that the people it sends out belong to Soviet intelligence.

This large-scale attack was highly successful. Out of the thousands of intelligence agents sent abroad, some dozen began to give positive results. The help of communists abroad also began to tell. Gradually quality began to creep into the work of the GRU. One of the first outstanding successes was the creation of the so-called 'Mrachkovski Enterprises' or, as it was officially called in GRU documents, 'the network of commercial undertakings'. Jacob Mrachkovski (his brother was a member of the Central Committee) was sent to Germany where he organised a small shop and then a small factory. Subsequently he bought, in fictitious names, several factories in France, Great Britain, Canada, the United States and finally China. The money put into these undertakings quickly grew and, after several years, the Mrachovski undertakings began to show profits of tens of millions of pounds. The money earned was used by

the GRU as its chief source of 'clean' money, that is, money which had never been on Soviet territory and consequently could be used for agents' operations. In addition to obtaining money the Mrachkovski undertakings were widely used for the legalisation of newly posted intelligence officers who by now were beginning to be better trained. Journeying from country to country, they found help and support from the Mrachkovski network. They got themselves jobs and after some months received the most laudatory references and went off into other countries where the same thing took place. This went on until the agent was able to stand on his own two feet. The security of the network was so tight that no undertaking ever suspected the existence of another. Mrachkovski himself travelled all over the world, buying up new enterprises, installing one or two of his own people and obtaining perfectly legal and highly lucrative licences and patents.

Relations with the Tchekists were gradually stretched to their limit. The Party was striving to inflame the hostility between the GRU and the Organs of State. Lenin made a great success of this, as did his successors. The next conflict broke out in the spring of 1920. Both Lenin and Trotsky considered themselves outstanding thinkers, theoreticians and practical men; men of deep knowledge as regards military affairs and international relations. Naturally neither one nor the other took any notice of evaluated intelligence. They both demanded that the intelligence material should be laid before them 'grey' and unevaluated: they would then draw their own conclusions and analyse the material on the basis of Marxist doctrine. But Marxism had very precisely and categorically foretold that there would be a world war in Europe which would be the last war of mankind. The imperialist war would develop into a worldwide revolution, after which a golden age would begin. Yet the war had finished two years before and no worldwide revolution had happened. Intelligence reported that there were no signs of this revolution coming about, so both Lenin and Trotsky were either compelled to admit that Marxism was wrong or to take measures to bring the revolution about. They decided to trigger off a revolution in Europe, starting with Poland. Intelligence assessments were ignored, and naturally the adventure ended in complete failure. Both the organisers immediately started to hunt for a scapegoat. The only possible explanation for the scandal was that the intelligence service had done its work badly. Lenin announced to the rank and file of the Party, 'We have suffered this defeat as a result of the negligence of the intelligence service.' But the GRU was a completely unknown entity, even to some of the highest representatives of the Soviet bureaucracy, and much more so to the rank-and-file Party members. All eyes turned towards the Tchekists. Their unpopularity among the people, even before this, was evident. After Lenin's announcement their authority finally fell. Dzerzhinsky caused a scandal in the Kremlin and demanded explanations from the Politburo. In order to calm the Tchekists and to support his own version of the story, Lenin permitted the Tchekists to purge the GRU. The first bloody purge took place in November 1920. On Lenin's orders hundreds of intelligence officers who had allegedly failed to evaluate the situation correctly were shot.

Up to this time there had been no need to account for the GRU's activities, but now information was made available to some Party members. This has led some specialists to the mistaken conclusion that the GRU did not exist until this time.

However, the GRU did not take long to recover from the 1920 Purge. This may be explained mainly by the fact that the overseas organs of the GRU were practically untouched, and this for eminently sound reasons. Neither Lenin nor Trotsky had any idea of shooting the intelligence officers who were overseas, not only because they were manifestly innocent, but also because their deaths would have absolutely no salutary effect on others since nobody would hear about them, not even the many members of the Central Committee. The other reason for the quick recovery of the

GRU was that its agent intelligence network in the military districts was also left untouched. At the end of the civil war, the fronts were transformed into 'military districts', but the chain of command in the new districts did not undergo any essential changes. A 'registration' department was included on the strength of the staff of each district which continued in peace-time to carry on agent intelligence work in countries where the district would have to carry out military activities in any future war. Up to the time of the 1920 purge there were fifteen military districts and two fleets in the Red Army. They all carried out, independently from each other, agent intelligence work of a very intensive nature.

The internal military districts were no exception. Their intelligence centres were moved out to the frontiers and it was from there that the direction of agents was undertaken. Each internal military district also has its tasks in wartime, and its intelligence work is based around these tasks. The direction of activities of a frontier district is very precisely defined; at the same time the internal district, independent of circumstances, may operate in different directions. Consequently its agent network in peacetime operates in different directions, too. For example, in 1920 agents of the Moscow military district operated on the territories of Poland, Lithuania (at that time still independent) and Finland. This system has prevailed in all respects, except that the districts and fleets have become more numerous, as also has money available for intelligence. We are richer now than we were then.

After 1927 Soviet military intelligence began to blossom. This was the year in which the first five-year plan was drawn up, which aimed (as all subsequent five-year plans have) exclusively at the growth of the military potential of the country. The plan stipulated the creation and speedy growth of the tank, ship-building, aviation and artillery industries. The Soviet Union set itself the target of creating the most powerful army in the world. The Soviet leadership made haste and demanded from its designers not only the creation of new kinds of weaponry and military technology, but also that Soviet armaments must be the best in the world. Monumental sums of money were spent to attain this aim: practically the whole of Russia's gold reserves was thrown into the task. At Western auctions the Soviet authorities sold off Russian corn and wood, pictures by Rembrandt and Nicholas II's stamp collection. A tidy sum of money was realised.

All GRU residents received book-length lists of foreign military technology which they would have to steal in the near future. The lists included equipment for bombers and fighters, anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns, howitzers and mortars, submarines and torpedo boats, radio valves and tank engines, the technology for the production of aluminium and equipment for boring out gun barrels. Yet another GRU tradition first saw the light of day in this period: that of stealing analogous kinds of armaments at the same time in different countries and then studying them to select the best. Thus, at the beginning of the 1930s, Soviet military intelligence succeeded in stealing samples or plans of torpedoes in Italy, France, the United States, Germany and Great Britain. It was hardly surprising that the Soviet torpedo, manufactured in the shortest possible time, conformed to the highest international standards. Sometimes Soviet copiers selected the best assemblies and components and constructed out of them a new type which often turned out to be the very best in the world. Luck too was on the side of Soviet military intelligence. Nobody took very seriously the efforts of the Soviet Union in the military sphere, and few countries went to great pains to hide their secrets from it. Communists the world over were obsessed by the idea of helping Soviet intelligence, Soviet residents were able to throw their money round, and finally

the great depression threw into the arms of Soviet intelligence thousands of opportunists who feared losing their factories, workshops or offices. Soviet intelligence, by the beginning of the 1930s, had attained unprecedented heights of power. Within Soviet territory the GRU had practically no political influence. In the international sphere it did not very much seek to enter into the political life of parties and states, but in the field of clean espionage the GRU already clearly occupied the leading position in the world, having by far overtaken the political intelligence work of the OGPU. At the beginning of the 1930s the GRU budget was several times larger than the overseas budget of the OGPU. This situation remains true today.

The system in use today of recruitment and running of agents had already fully developed by the end of the 1920s. In agent organisations directly subordinated to the GRU the recruitment and running of agents was in the hands of 'illegals', that is, GRU officers posted abroad undercover with forged documents and offices, posing as Soviet diplomats, consuls, trade representatives, correspondents and so on. In agent organisations subordinated to military districts and fleets the recruitments of agents was carried out from the territory of the Soviet Union. Only rarely did certain officers of the intelligence directorates of districts travel abroad with forged documents for short periods. Before diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union, emphasis was concentrated on the activities of illegals, but after its recognition, undercover residencies were added to the numerous illegal residencies. The GRU illegals and undercover residencies acted independently from each other but in the pre-war period the communications of illegals from GRU residencies with the Centre were frequently accomplished through the Soviet embassies. This was a very serious mistake. With the beginning of the war when the embassies were closed or blockaded, the communication with illegals was disrupted. The mistake was subsequently rectified. Military district intelligence always operated independently of the GRU illegals and Soviet embassies, and for this reason at the beginning of the war it was practically unharmed. Gradually a tendency became noticeable in the operations of military district intelligence services to limit the use of Soviet officers even for short trips abroad. Faced with wartime conditions the military district intelligence services began to recruit and run their agents only from Soviet territory. The recruitment of new agents was carried out either on Soviet territory or on the territory of neighbouring countries by means of agents who had been recruited earlier.

There is an interesting story to be told about the recruitment of agents at this time, whose moral holds as true today. In the pre-war period, recruitment took up little time. The Comintern simply made a decision and immediately scores, sometimes hundreds of communists became Soviet secret agents. In the interests of successful agent work, the GRU always demanded from them that they should publicly resign from the communist party. The vast majority accepted this without demur. After all, it was only a camouflage, a Bolshevik manoeuvre to help defeat the class enemy. Sometimes however, there were communists who were unwilling. In Germany, one group agreed to the GRU's demands only on condition that it was accepted into the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The demand was a simple one, for it is not difficult for the GRU to write out a dozen new party cards, and as the new agent group was working so successfully, the GRU did not want to refuse. At a routine meeting the GRU case officer, an employee of the Soviet embassy in Berlin, informed the group's leader that their demands had been met. He congratulated the group on becoming members of the CPSU and informed them, in conclusion, that the General Secretary of the Party himself, comrade Stalin, had written out the party cards. As an exceptional case, the German communists had been accepted without going through the candidacy stage. Their party cards were naturally to be kept in the Central Committee.

At this news the group's productivity redoubled. It was supposed to receive a certain sum of money for its work, but the group members refused to accept the money. More than that, they began to hand over to their case officers sums of their own money, in order to pay their membership fees to the Soviet communist party. Punctually they handed over to their case officers all documents and payslips concerning their earnings together with their party subscriptions. This took up a great deal of time during the agent meetings, but the Germans were working very productively and nobody wanted to offend them.

Some time later, the Gestapo got on their trail, but all the members of the group managed to escape into Austria, then to Switzerland and finally through France to Spain where the civil war was going on. From Spain they were brought to Moscow, Terrible disappointments awaited them in the capital of the Proletariat of all the world, the chief of which was that nobody into at any time written out their party cards, or accepted them into the Soviet communist party. The GRU officials had of course assumed that the agents would never set foot in the Soviet Union on that therefore it would be very easy to dupe them. However, on their arrival in Moscow, the first thing the agents did was to declare a hunger strike and demand a meeting with the higher leadership of the GRU. The meeting took place and the GRU leadership did all in its power to help the Germans join the party, after going through the candidate stage, naturally. But foreigners can only be accepted in the CPSU through the Central Committee, and the natural questions arose: 'Were you ever members of the communist party? Why did you leave it?' The fanatics told exactly what had really happened but were damned out of their own mouths. To burn one's party card is a cardinal sin — and the Central Committee threw out their application. The Germans again declared a hunger strike and demanded a meeting with Stalin in person. At this point the NKVD offered its help to the Central Committee, but the GRU intervened, being in no way desirous that its agents should fall into the hands of the NKVD. So the ex-agents ended up in the GRU cellars.

In the meantime, the political situation had changed sharply. Hitler had become Stalin's best friend and the communists likewise friends of the fascists. There ensued an exchange of gifts — the most up-to-date German military aeroplanes for Stalin (including the top secret ME109, JU87, JU88, DO217, HEIII and even the ME110) in exchange for the surrender of all German communists who had taken political asylum in the Soviet Union. Hitler's calculation was very simple. In the short time before war broke out, the Russians would not be able to copy the planes, but he would have the heads of his political opponents. It was a fruitful deal for Stalin too. He was bored with the German communists and now he would be able to give them to the Gestapo in exchange for the best German aeroplanes. In addition to the ordinary members, there were members of the German Central Committee and the Politburo, together with the editors of the communist newspaper. These were not taken to Germany, but the Gestapo was told it could shoot them in situ, in the Moscow area. However, as far as the former GRU agents were concerned, the decision had been taken not to hand them over. They knew too much. The German embassy in Moscow was informed that they had all died in Spain and had never got as far as Moscow. The fascists did not object but suggested they would present one more aircraft at the same price. Unfortunately, the former agents, not knowing anything about the bargaining that was going on, again declared a hunger strike, and this decided their fate. The Soviet side now admitted to the fascists that they were in Moscow and proposed a compromise. The fascists could shoot their victims in the Soviet Union without talking to them. The execution took place among the huge coal bunkers of the Kashierski Electric Power Station. Beforehand, the Gestapo men had personally identified each of the people to be executed and photographed them; then, under cover of protracted whistling of

locomotives, they shot them all. Afterwards, joint detachments of the GRU, the Central Committee of the Soviet communist party and the Gestapo burnt the bodies in the furnaces of the power station.

The Germans' mistake was threefold: they believed too quickly in the promises of the GRU; they insisted too strongly on the GRU's fulfilling its promises; and they forgot that if somebody puts a high enough price on the head of an agent, however good he may be, the GRU will sell him without hesitation.

In the meantime the Party, under the leadership of Stalin, arrived face to face with the ultimate necessity of subjugating all layers of Soviet society and utterly eradicating dissension. The decision was taken by the Party to purge the whole country of potential dissidents. Today we have irrefutable proof that the 'Great Terror' was carefully planned and prepared. On the testimony of A. Avtorhanov the Central Committee of the Party had, as long ago as 13 May 1935, taken the decision to create a special security commission for carrying out mass repressions in the country, which took place in 1937 to 1938.

For almost two years the Special Commission prepared the most bloody page in the history of mankind. Its members were Stalin, Zhdanov, Yezhov, Shkiriakov, Malenkov and Voyshinski. It is interesting to note that the then head of NKVD, Yagoda, was not a member of the Commission, and this was a sensible move. Before carrying out its massive blood-letting of the whole of society, the Party took pains to purge the surgical instrument itself, the NKVD organs. The purge began secretly as early as 1935 and at that stage concerned only the organs and the overseas residencies of the NKVD. In order not to frighten anybody, it was carried out secretly and without public trials. Naturally it was the GRU which was entrusted with the task of purging the NKVD overseas organs. In 1935 Yan Karlovich Berzin, the GRU's chief, travelled to the Far East with special powers and a group of trusted helpers. Secret orders appointing one I. S. Unshlikht and later S. T. Uritski as chief of the GRU were issued. But no order was issued for Berzin to relinquish his post. In other words, the appointment of Uritski was simply a cover-up for the long absence of Berzin. In the Far East Berzin and his assistants secretly liquidated the leading illegals of the NKVD. In the following year Berzin, with his assistants, appeared in Spain. His official job was Chief Advisor to the Spanish Government, a post in which he was extremely active. Firstly, he endeavoured to direct the activities of the Spanish Government along lines favourable to Moscow. Secondly, he personally ran from Spain the whole of the overseas network of the GRU. And finally, he did not forget his most important task. The head of the Foreign Directorate of the NKVD, Slutski, was also in Spain, also personally supervising the activities of all his overseas agents. In all probability Slutski was aware that Berzin and the GRU had some connection with the mysterious disappearance of NKVD illegals. Evidence has been preserved which shows that Slutski and Berzin had clashes practically every day in Spain. However, at the same time, the intelligence chief of the NKVD was finding himself increasingly subject to the chief of Soviet military intelligence. At the end of September 1936 the NKVD chief, Yagoda, was dismissed from his post and the secretary of the Central Committee of the Party, Ezhov, was appointed in his place. Ezhov himself began a most cruel purge of the NKVD — and he no longer required the assistance of the GRU. More than 3,000 Tchekists were shot on Ezhov's orders, including Yagoda and Slutski themselves. It is interesting to note that Yagoda's death followed an open trial, but Slutski was murdered secretly, in the same way as his best illegal residents had been executed previously. After the Party, in the person of Ezhov and with the help of the GRU, had

purged the NKVD, the time came for the Army to be dealt with. This purge began with the liquidation of the general staff — and the complete destruction of the GRU. Among those military leaders first executed together with Marshal Tukhachevski were army commanders Yakir and Uboreevich and Corps Commander Putna, the Soviet military attache in London. As might be expected, all military attaches are GRU officers; but Putna was not simply a military attache. Until his appointment to London he had been deputy chief of the GRU. His execution served as an extra excuse for the NKVD to carry out a special purge in the ranks of the GRU. Hatred which had been collecting for many years at last came out into the open. In the course of the purge first the acting head of the GRU, Uritski, was arrested and shot, and after him all the rest. The NKVD and GRU now exchanged roles. NKVD men with special powers went around the world destroying both GRU illegals and also those intelligence officers of the GRU and NKVD who had refused to return to the Soviet Union and certain destruction. In the course of the 1937 purge the GRU was completely destroyed- even down to the lavatory attendants and cooks on its payroll. Berzin, back from Spain, had to re-create the GRU from scratch.

By the autumn of 1937, by a special effort of the Comintern -particularly in Spain with the help and coercion of the International Brigades — the GRU had somewhat recovered its strength. A year later Soviet military intelligence had returned to its stormy activities. But in the summer of 1938, in the course of a second wave of terror, the GRU was again destroyed, losing its entire strength. This time Berzin himself, one of the cleverest and most successful leaders the GRU has had, was among the victims.

The blow delivered automatically meant a blow to all organisations subordinate to the GRU, that is to the intelligence directorates of the military districts. Here the death-dealing whirlwind came twice, literally destroying everything. During the pre-war years, in the areas of western military districts the intelligence directorates had extended the existing reserves of underground armies in case of the occupation of these areas by an enemy. Secret depots and stores of weapons and explosives had been established, radio sets had been secreted and refuges for partisans and intelligence officers had been set up. In the terror, all this was destroyed, and tens of thousands of trained partisans and saboteurs, ready to meet the enemy, were shot or perished in prisons and concentration camps. Military intelligence ceased to exist. And not only military intelligence; the Army had been bled white, and military industry, too. But Ezhov, the head of the NKVD, had made a fatal mistake in taking Berzin's place when he was executed on 29 July 1938. The very next day, Stalin received only one report on both GRU and NKVD activities, instead of the usual two. The implication was clear: a monopoly of secret activity had begun, and Stalin now had no way to balance the power of the NKVD. With his customary precision and deliberation he realised that his control of Soviet intelligence was slipping away and the same day, 30 July, he set in train the events which would lead to Ezhov's removal and execution.

In the winter of 1939/40 there occurred an improbable scandal. The Red Army, whose strength at the moment of the attack was more than four million men, was unable to crush the resistance of the Finnish Army, whose strength was only 27,000 men. Reasons for this were quickly found. Of course there was the cold. (The German Army's right to claim the same reason for its defeat in the winter of 1941 was unanimously denied.) The second reason was the intelligence service. In all Soviet historical works (which may be published only with the permission of the Propaganda Department of the Party Central Committee), even to this day, the cold and poor intelligence are the reasons always given. The Party forgets to specify that from 1937

to 1939 Soviet military intelligence was practically non-existent, at the Party's own wish.

After the Finnish scandal, Stalin did not order a purge of the GRU. It is probable that at that time there was nobody to purge, but he still ordered the execution of General Proskurov, the new head of the GRU, and his staff because of Proskurov's disagreement with him over the Hitler-Stalin pact. In June 1940 General Filipp Golikov was appointed chief of the GRU. Under Golikov the GRU was reborn amazingly quickly into an effective intelligence force. There has been much speculation about this period. Did the GRU know of the plans for Germany's attack on the Soviet Union or not? The best answer to the question must lie in Golikov's own survival. Seven leaders before him and two after him were murdered, yet he went on to become Stalin's Deputy of Personnel and Marshal of the Soviet Union. The political leadership may not take the right decision, even with the best information that Golikov could give, but it will not bite the hand that feeds it.

The war had begun with a catastrophic defeat for the Soviet Union. In the first few hours the German Army succeeded in securing a strategic initiative. Thousands of serviceable aircraft were destroyed on their airfields and thousands of tanks burned in their own parks.

It may have been that Stalin spared Golikov in order to give him a testing assignment. He was certainly told to take himself abroad and revive and renew the GRU agent network which had been cut off immediately. He went first to England and then to the United States and, to give him his due, this time he succeeded in carrying out his work in an exemplary manner. For his visits to Great Britain and the United States he naturally did not use faked documents. He came, with a numerous entourage, as the head of an official Soviet military delegation to obtain American and British armaments. For the chief of the GRU and his colleagues the doors of secret factories and laboratories were opened — the very places Soviet intelligence had been trying for decades to penetrate. This historical visit was the beginning of intense penetration by Soviet military intelligence of the armaments industries of America and Britain. Golikov also succeeded, albeit only temporarily, in establishing communications with GRU illegals who were functioning on territory occupied by Germany; but this also signalled the beginning of GRU penetration of the German general staff from many different quarters. The consequences of this were that, beginning with Stalingrad, even top secret plans of the German High Command were known to Soviet front-line generals before they were known to the German field commanders. And the Soviet military leadership was equally enlightened as to the plans of its allies, the Americans and the British. Churchill bears witness to the fact that Stalin enumerated several points as to the contents of British top secret plans, though he attributes such enlightenment to Stalin's genius in foreseeing the future. The only thing that is not clear is why Stalin did not display a similar clairvoyancy with regard to Hitler's intentions in 1941 and the beginning of 1942.

In the autumn of 1941 Golikov returned from the United States, an another exceptionally successful visit. He could not, of course, expect to keep his post, but he stayed alive, and even kept his General's rank. On 13 October he was relieved of the command of the GRU and appointed commander of the 10th Army.

Later, in 1944, Stalin gave Golikov yet another chance to expiate his guilt with regard to the sudden German attack. In October he was appointed plenipotentiary of the Council of People's Commissars on Questions of the Repatriation of Soviet Citizens. At the same time as he was occupied with this task several of the former residents of the GRU in Europe were assigned to him. He acquitted himself again with great credit and, being able to count on the help of the GRU, succeeded in returning to the Soviet Union several million people who were practically all shot on arrival.

Golikov's career was on the up and up, and he eventually reached the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union.

In the autumn of 1941, after Golikov had relinquished his post, the GRU was divided into two. One of the newly-created organisations was directly answerable to Stalin and entitled the Chief Intelligence Directorate of the Supreme High Command. In the hands of this organisation was concentrated the agent network controlled by illegals and undercover residencies of the GRU in a small number of Soviet embassies. The 'other' GRU was subordinated to the general staff and preserved its former name of Chief Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff. But now this junior branch of the GRU co-ordinated the efforts of intelligence officers on all Soviet fronts in action against Germany. This new set-up was fully justified at that time. The GRU general staff was freed from having to make decisions on global problems which at that moment had lost their importance for the Soviet Union and instead was able to concentrate all its attention on carrying out intelligence operations against German forces. In order to distinguish between the two GRU's; the term 'strategic intelligence' was introduced for the first time and applied to the GRU of the Supreme Command, and the new title of 'operational intelligence' was given to the Intelligence Directorate of Fronts and the GRU of the general staff which controlled these directorates. Both the strategic and operational intelligence services of the Red Army conducted themselves with great distinction in the course of the war. The finest achievements of the strategic agent network were of course the penetration of the German general staff through Switzerland (via the illegal residency 'Dora') and the theft of American atomic secrets by way of Canada (through the residency 'Zaria'). Operational intelligence meanwhile developed activities unparalleled in scale. Besides its agent intelligence, a very large role was allocated to diversionary intelligence. Groups of guard-minelayers were formed in the intelligence units of the fronts and armies whose basic purpose was to hunt down the German military staff. Parallel with these diversionary elements of the GRU, analogous groups of NKVD men were in action at the rear of German forces. Between these two groups the traditional enmity fostered by the Party continued.

After the war, military intelligence was once again fused into one organisation, GRU General Staff, which independently carried out strategic intelligence and directed operational and tactical intelligence. At this time the Party and Stalin took care to weaken the Army and the Ministry of State Security, both of which had strengthened their positions during the war to such an extent that they had stopped acknowledging the civil leadership, i.e. the party. The leading commanders, headed by Zhukov, were dismissed from the Army and Beria was also deprived of the leadership of the Tchekists. It would obviously not be a simple matter to expel him, so Stalin technically promoted him, appointing his deputy to succeed him, but in fact this deprived him of direct leadership of the Organs of State because his title of minister was taken away. Within the framework of the programme for weakening the Army and the Ministry of State Security, Stalin decided to remove intelligence from both the Army and State Security. This plan was put into effect in 1947. The GRU and the organs of political intelligence of the Ministry of State Security were joined together in one organisation called the KI: the Committee of Information. The man closest to Stalin was appointed to lead this organisation, and this was the activist of the Politburo, Molotov. Thus the Army and Ministry of State Security were deprived of intelligence. All intelligence work would henceforth be subordinate to the Party. Such a situation did not suit the Army or the Ministry of State Security, and they for the first time united against the Party.

>From its inception the Committee of Information was an utterly ineffective organisation. The intelligence officers of the Ministry of State Security and the GRU, who formed the nucleus of the Committee of Information, strove by all means to return from under the control of the Party back to their own former organisations. Both sets of officers strove to sabotage the activities of the Committee of Information. The Ministry of State Security and the Army, acting in collusion, informed the Central Committee that they could no longer work effectively since they were receiving their information at second hand. Then they exerted pressure on their former officers in order to try to make the Committee of Information collapse from inside. The Central Committee of the Party made efforts to improve the effectiveness of the Committee of Information. In less than a year four chiefs were appointed and dismissed, for the reason that not one of them was able to counter the unified strength of the Ministry of State Security and the Army. After long struggles behind the scenes Abakumov, a pupil and favourite of Beria, became Chief of the Committee of Information.

At a stroke, all the intelligence services passed to the control of the Ministry of State Security. Stalin immediately saw that a mistake had been made. In his opinion, the creation of one intelligence service, even if it was under the leadership of the Party, must sooner or later lead to the Tchekists seizing power over this organisation, and this would mortally endanger the Party. There was only one way out of such a situation: immediately to liquidate the Committee of Information and divide the intelligence service into two hostile camps — military intelligence to the Army, and political intelligence to State Security. But the coup was not an easy one. To get round the problem, the Party naturally found support from the Army which had not been at all happy with State Security's monopoly of the intelligence service. On the instructions of Stalin, the first deputy of the chief of the general staff, General Shtemyenko, made a report to the Politburo on the subject of the 'blind general staff, after which the GRU was removed from the control of Abakumov and given to the Army. For his distinguished services, Stalin immediately appointed General Shtemyenko as chief of the general staff—the senior curator of the GRU. After two years Shtemyenko and the GRU, seeking to please Stalin, presented documents about the existence of an agreement among subordinates of Abakumov. Abakumov was immediately shot, the Committee of Information finally abolished, and the usual purge carried out in the ranks of State Security.

But the Ministry of State Security did not forgive the general staff and the GRU for having taken such liberties. 1952 was a year of struggle between the Politburo and Stalin. The Ministry of State Security presented documents which they claimed proved the existence of a plot in the ranks of the GRU. This time it was the turn of the GRU and all the general staff to be purged. Stalin was opposed to the move, but the Politburo insisted. Shtemyenko was demoted to Lt-General and expelled from the general staff. The action continued against the general staff and the GRU, and even against Stalin himself who was removed as general secretary of the Communist Party later that year.

At the beginning of 1953, immediately after the death of Stalin, there ensued a fierce squabble among his disciples and comrades at arms for the distribution of the inheritance. The most dangerous pretender to the throne was, of course, Beria. The united strength of Army and Party was automatically against him. Beria was arrested at a joint session of Party and Army leaders and immediately done away with. After this there began the usual persecution of the Organs of State. During secret trials, incriminating documents were produced from the GRU concerning the leaders of the Ministry of State Security and many of its leaders were shot after frightful torture. The torture was carried out in the GRU cellars on Gogol Boulevard. At the beginning of

1954 the Ministry of State Security lost its status as a ministry and was transformed into a committee.

Simultaneously with the fall of the Ministry of State Security, the Army acquired more and more weight within the framework of the State. The 'Russian Bonaparte', Marshal Zhukov, became Minister of Defence, having returned from his exile under Stalin. After a short time Zhukov also became a member of the Politburo. He quickly effected the return of all the exiled generals and marshals and appointed them to key positions. The Ministry of State Security could not exercise any restraint on Zhukov and he was therefore able to appoint Shtemyenko to the post of Chief of the GRU, reinstating him as a full general after his demotion. The GRU became an organisation solely dependent on the Army. Zhukov's next step was a blow against Party influence in the Army. On his orders all political workers and Party commissars were expelled from the Army. He also ordered the Chief Political Directorate of the Soviet Army to stop interfering any more in Army affairs, and at the same time liquidated all the special departments of State Security present in the Army. The crocodile was clearly throwing off its bonds. In Politburo sessions Zhukov openly contradicted Khrushchev and publicly abused him.

The party understood how rashly it had behaved in depriving the KGB of power, since the Party alone was clearly defenceless against the Army. There was absolutely no doubt that very soon the Army would become the only master of the situation. But in October 1957 Zhukov committed a grave error. He went on a visit to Yugoslavia and in his absence, a plenum of the Central Committee of the Party was hurriedly convened. Zhukov was secretly removed from the Politburo and also from his duties as Minister of Defence because of 'bonapartism'. The chief of the GRU, General Shtemyenko, learned about what had happened and immediately sent a telegram of warning to Zhukov in Yugoslavia, but it was intercepted by the KGB. Zhukov returned from Yugoslavia straight into renewed exile. Shtemyenko followed him, again reduced to the rank of lieutenant-general. (Some survive vicissitudes better than others: under Brezhnev, Shtemyenko was again reinstated.)

Now once more the post of chief of the GRU was held by a member of the KGB, Ivan Serov. Henceforth everything would go according to Lenin's teachings. Serov, on his appointment, automatically turned into an arch-rival and enemy of the KGB, and was not in the least interested in the fusion of these two organisations. But since he had been a general of the KGB, the Army could not exploit him against the Party and the KGB. That was not all. In order to control the Army in the interests of the Party, General Golikov, the former chief of the GRU, was appointed chief of the Political Directorate of the Soviet Army. Golikov was a former Tchevist and political worker and he was ready to serve anybody who desired his services and to report only the data which would please the leadership. Such a person was eminently suitable as far as the Party was concerned.

Serov's successor as chief of the GRU was Colonel-General of the KGB, Petr Ivashutin. General Yepishev, who had been from 1951 to 1953 Deputy Minister of State Security, succeeded Golikov as chief of the Political Directorate of the Soviet Army. In a word, the crocodile was again firmly on the leash.

Chapter Three

The Pyramid

If we approach the term GRU in a formal way in order to explain everything that is covered by those three letters, we shall get a very impressive picture but one that is far from complete. To look at the GRU in isolation from its subordinate organisations is to look at Gengis Khan without his innumerable hordes.

The GRU may formally be described as an immensely powerful intelligence organisation forming part of the general staff and acting in the interests of the higher military command of the Soviet Union. On its strength there are more than five thousand senior officers and generals who have specialist academic qualifications in intelligence matters. The GRU has its illegal representatives in every country of the world. In addition, officers of the GRU operate under cover in every country of the world as diplomats, military attaches, trade representatives and so on. Both the illegals and the undercover officers independently from each other carry out the recruitment of agents, who then, under the direction of the GRU steal top-secret documents, axe governments and kill statesmen. The central apparatus of the GRU processes espionage information coming from a thousand secret agents and it also carries out cosmic, electronic, air and sea intelligence on a global scale.

But we have not mentioned the most important point yet. Up to now we are talking about Gengis Khan but not his hordes. What is more important is that, in addition to all this, in addition to carrying out intelligence work in the interests of the general staff, the GRU is also the superior directing organ of the gigantic formation called Soviet military intelligence.

Organisationally, the Soviet Army consists of sixteen military districts, four 'groups of forces' — in Germany, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia — and four fleets — the Northern, Pacific, Black Sea and Baltic fleets. On the staff strengths of each district, group and fleet there are intelligence directorates. In all, these directorates number twenty-four. They are all subject to the GRU and are, in effect, a GRU in miniature. Each of these mini-GRU's utilises its own facilities. With all the forces at their disposal, they gather information on the enemy, both in peace-time and wartime.

When we speak of an intelligence directorate of a district, group or fleet as a mini-GRU, this does not in the least mean that the intelligence directorate is small or weak. We only mean that the intelligence directorates (RU) of staffs are smaller than the chief directorate of the general staff. But each of these twenty-four intelligence directorates is sufficiently strong to be able to recruit agents independently in the territories of countries or groups of countries which are in the sphere of interest of the given district, group or fleet. Each intelligence directorate possesses sufficient power to be able, without assistance, to disrupt life in any contiguous country or group of countries. There is only one form of intelligence possessed by the GRU which the intelligence directorates do not possess, and this is cosmic or space intelligence. At the same time, instead of this, they have a perhaps no less important means, which are the diversionary Spetsnaz units. In addition to ordinary agents providing secret information, the intelligence directorates recruit special agent- terrorists destined to murder statesmen or senior military officers and to carry out general terror in the country or group of countries. Thus each district, group of forces or fleet has its own two independent secret agent networks, the first being the ordinary espionage network, and the second the espionage-terrorist network called Spetsnaz. To visualize the strength of one intelligence directorate, it is sufficient to remember that each one controls an entire Spetsnaz brigade: 1,300 professional cut-throats continually in readiness to penetrate the territory of a contiguous state and go to the assistance of the agent-terrorists.

One can best imagine Soviet military intelligence in the form of a powerful, feudal state — the GRU — with a first-class army. There are twenty-four lesser satellite

states, the intelligence directorates (RU), subordinated to the head of this state, and each of these in its turn has its own army, and a strong one at that. But each satellite also has its vassals each of whom has his own army and his own vassals, also with armies, and so forth. The only difference as regards this pyramid form of subordination is that Soviet military intelligence does not operate on the principle that 'the vassal of vassal is not my vassal'. The GRU fully and without delegating authority controls every step of the pyramid. These steps need to be examined.

Each military district and group of forces consists of armies. Each fleet consists of flotillas which are equivalent to the armies of the land forces. On the staff of each army there is an intelligence department (RO) which is in effect a full vassal of the superior intelligence directorate and the still superior chief intelligence directorate. The intelligence department (RO) of an army or flotilla does run an agent network of its own. On the strength of each intelligence department, and there are in the Soviet armed forces at least fifty, there is a Spetsnaz company. This company, which numbers 115 saboteurs and cut-throats, is capable of penetrating into the enemy's territory to murder and kidnap people, blow up bridges, electric power stations, dams, oil pipelines and so on. And these Spetsnaz units are supplemented by the intelligence department's wide choice of electronic, air and other types of intelligence.

An army in the Soviet Union consists of from four to six divisions. In peace-time there are in the Soviet armed forces about 180 tank and motorised divisions. In the interests of simplification we can omit the eight divisions of airborne forces (VDV), the brigades of marine infantry belonging to the fleets and still many more branches of the Soviet Army which have intelligence units subordinated directly to the GRU of the general staff. On the strength of the staff of each division there is a chief reconnaissance officer. He has his own troops, a reconnaissance battalion, and his vassals, the heads of regimental reconnaissance and their troops. The reconnaissance battalion of each division, apart from tank and electronic reconnaissance, has a sabotage company which is also staffed with cut-throats capable of successful operations in the enemy's rear. In the interests of accuracy it is necessary to add that not all of the 180 tank and motorised rifle divisions have a full complement of personnel in peace-time; many of them have a complete technical staff and full officer strength, but only a partial complement of soldiers and NCOs. However, this rule does not apply to reconnaissance units. All the Spetsnaz brigades and companies of the military districts and armies, all the reconnaissance battalions (180) of the divisions, all the regimental reconnaissance companies (more than 700), are always kept at full strength and staffed by elite officers and NCOs.

Everything that we have listed comes under the indivisible control of the GRU, although none of it is called by this name. The researcher who studies the GRU but does not take into consideration the GRU's vassals will have overlooked twenty-four separate espionage organisations, each of which is as powerful as the intelligence service of one central European country. He will have overlooked 100,000 elite troops possessing as many fighting vehicles as a well-equipped Western European country. But even that is not all. In addition to its official vassals the GRU also has unofficial vassals who carry out the orders of the GRU as precisely and with as much jealous zeal as do the intelligence directorates of military districts, the intelligence departments of armies and the chief reconnaissance officers of divisions and regiments. These are the military intelligence services of Cuba, Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Mongolia and a number of other countries. These countries are satellites and in the full meaning of the word vassals of the Soviet Union. Their secret police forces are under the complete control of the Soviet KGB and take the form of a miniature copy of the KGB. Their armies are in thrall to the Soviet Army and their military intelligence services are full vassals of the GRU, with all their

agents, illegals, military attaches, sabotage agents, diversionary troops and so on. But of these later.

Chapter Four

The GRU and the Military Industrial Commission (VPK)

When we use the term 'army' with regard to the Soviet Army we must have in mind not only the Ministry of Defence, but also the twelve other ministries whose sole function it is to produce weapons and military technology. Together all these ministries form the high-powered monolith headed by the military industrial commission (VPK). Included in the collegium of the military industrial commission are: one of the first deputies of the chairman of the council of ministers, thirteen ministers, and the chief of the general staff and the chief of the GRU. The military industrial commission is the Army and the Army is the military industrial commission. When we talk of a struggle between the Army and the Party and the KGB we have in mind the struggle of the whole military industrial commission, whose fortunes wax and wane in perfect harmony with the Army's own.

The economic and financial might of the military industrial commission can only be compared with the might of the Soviet Union itself. Theoretically the Soviet Union spends, in the interests of defence, the improbably small sum of nineteen billion roubles a year. This nineteen billion, however, is the budget of the Ministry of Defence alone. The budgets of the remaining twelve ministries which produce armaments are kept secret. The Soviet system is constructed in such a way that the Ministry of Defence does not buy; it receives the armaments necessary to it. For example, an aircraft carrier is under construction in the Soviet Union. The Ministry of Defence does not bear any of the cost of this. The price of the ship is paid to the Ministry of Shipbuilding by the Council of Ministers under the debit item 'shipbuilding industry'. This Ministry, by the way, has never constructed any non-military vessels. Non-military vessels are, without exception, bought for the Soviet Union in Poland, East Germany, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Italy, France, Norway, Sweden, Denmark — it is difficult indeed to list all of them. It is probably true that only Switzerland is an exception to this list. The same thing is true of aircraft, tanks, rockets, nuclear bombs, military electronics, every item of hardware. Nobody in the Soviet Union knows exactly how much the military industrial commission swallows up, but in any case it is an astronomical figure.

At the heart of any Soviet five-year plan for economic development — not the propaganda plan which appears in all the newspapers, but the genuine, secret plan — will be found the military industrial commission's plan. For all the other branches of the Soviet economy, metallurgy, machine tool construction, energy, transport, agriculture, have no independent significance but only provide for the activities of the military industrial commission. Soviet science is another organ providing for the military industrial commission. Officially it is allocated about sixty billion roubles a year, three times more than defence. But what sort of science is it, if the Soviet Union can produce the first automatic satellite destroyer in the world but cannot produce an ordinary compact, small-engined car? The Soviet Union has had to buy all its technology for the production of small cars from Italy. What are Soviet scientists up to if the Soviet Union has first-class military poisons but has to buy fertiliser technology from the United States? What are the sixty billion roubles spent on if the USSR constructs gigantic trans-norizontal radar, ultra-high frequency transmitters for communications with submarines whose underground aerals amount to thousands of

kilometres in length — but has to buy the technology for the production of ordinary household television sets from France? Sixty billion roubles on science is yet another means of camouflaging Soviet military expenditure and the true might of the military industrial commission.

What has the GRU to do with this? The connection is this: the budget of the GRU is many times greater than the budget of the KGB. But the KGB is much bigger than the GRU, it has a vast apparatus within the country and its political influence is colossal. So why is the financial might of the GRU many times greater than that of the KGB? (Some specialists consider it to be several tens of times greater.) The business may be explained as follows. The KGB has its budget, which is without doubt enormous, and the GRU also has a moderate budget. Both form a part of State expenses and naturally the State tries to limit these expenses. But in addition to its 'clean' budget the GRU has colossal orders from the military industrial commission and from Soviet science which provides for the military commission. These orders are incalculably greater than the actual 'clean' budget of the GRU. For example, on receiving an order from the military industrial commission to steal a tank engine, the GRU receives money allocated as a debit item to 'science' or 'industry'. With this money the GRU will recruit an agent without spending a single cent of its own money, industry and science will receive the engine they want and save enormous expense, and finally the GRU's 'free' agent will continue to work on its behalf for the rest of his life. All twelve ministries of the military industrial commission, plus all of military science, are ready to place money with the GRU if only they can obtain the technology which is essential to them. Designers and factory directors receive medals and prizes for copying foreign samples of armaments in the same way as they would if they worked out their own examples. The KGB depends only on its actual budget, but the GRU draws on the budget of all Soviet armament industries and science. In the course of a major GRU operation, such as the theft of all the technological documentation for the American nuclear submarine George Washington (which enabled the Soviet Union to build a perfect copy -nicknamed 'Small George'), the GRU will not spend a single dollar of its own budget. Other memorable examples were the copying of the American missile 'Red Eye' and the Anglo-French Concorde, among many others.

Why does the KGB not carry out orders for the armaments industry? This is very simple. The chairmen of the Council of Ministers and Gosplan [The State planning committee] are responsible for the Soviet economy. They plan how much money to allocate, to whom and for what purpose. To the chairman of the Council of Ministers are subordinated both the armaments industry and the Minister of Defence with the general staff and the GRU. The KGB, alas, is not answerable to the chairman of the Council of Ministers. Having given money to the GRU to obtain something interesting, the chairman of the Council of Ministers or the chairman of the military industrial commission may bang on the table and demand that delivery be speeded up. But if they give money to the KGB then they will have to wait quietly until the KGB is ready to deliver the goods. The KGB is not usually in much of a hurry, even when it has been handsomely and generously paid. The KGB is a vain and arrogant courtier, having the right to speak at the King's council, but without a sou in his pocket. The GRU is an ugly hunchback: a moneylender, ready to serve anybody and making millions in the process. The courtier hates the moneylender. The courtier would kill the moneylender were it not for the fact that he serves the King himself.

Chapter Five

But Why is Nothing Known about it?

In the Soviet Union the registration plates of certain cars from Georgia end with the letters GRU. This amusing coincidence goes unnoticed by almost everybody, including the police, for the GRU is unknown in the Soviet Union except to a small circle of enlightened ones. Even in the general staff, of which the GRU is a part, thousands of colonels simply consider that 'military department 44388', whence comes all espionage information, is a branch of the KGB. Moreover, KGB officers who guard Soviet embassies overseas but are not members of the KGB intelligence organisation consider, in many cases, that there is only one residency in the embassy, that of the KGB.

Much is known about the GRU by Western specialists, but the ordinary Western man in the street has practically no idea at all about it. His attitude is analogous to his attitude to the mythical animal from a Scottish loch: either it exists, there have been photographs published of it, or then again perhaps it does not exist. Some believe, others do not, but decidedly nobody is frightened of the animal. Nevertheless, how can so little be known about the GRU, given that it certainly exists and certainly possesses colossal power?

There are quite a few reasons, so let us discuss the most important ones. Firstly, having established their bloody dictatorship, the communists had to announce to the people the existence of an 'extraordinary' organ of the dictatorship of the proletariat which was permitted to deal in whatever way it pleased with the people — including the mass executions of millions. They did this through the mouth of Lenin when he informed the people about the birth of the V. Tcheka. Later Lenin's successors informed people of all the changes in the names of the Organs, underlining that it was only the nomenclature that changed. The essence remained as before. Traditions live, and it is still forbidden to complain about the Organs. The GRU did not need such publicity and therefore nothing official was given out about its existence. Secondly, the main function of the Organs is to exert pressure on the people themselves. Consequently in the people's consciousness everything that is dark, underground and secret is connected with the KGB but not at all with the GRU. In practical terms the GRU did not take part in the struggle against the people. Not because it was full of humanity and love for its fatherland, but simply because nobody had given it this function. Naturally people remember the KGB (on any pretext), but never the GRU. Thirdly, in his struggle for power, Krushchev made known to a stunned world some of the crimes of his predecessors and honourable Tchekists. The effect was so shattering that from that moment the whole world unreservedly saw the leadership of the KGB in all spheres of secret criminal activity. Krushchev by no means revealed everything, but only that which at a given moment might bring him undoubted political capital. He pointed to the mass executions in Stalin's time but forgot to mention the mass executions in Lenin's time. He mentioned the destruction of the communist leaders in 1937 but omitted the destruction of the peasants in 1930. He demonstrated the role of the NKVD but completely forgot the role of the communist party as the main, leading and directing force. Krushchev was interested in showing up the crimes of the Organs within the country and he did show up several of them. Revelations of crimes committed overseas did not enter into Krushchev's plans. They could not bring him any political advantage. He was therefore silent in this regard and did not mention the overseas crimes of the KGB and, of course, those of the GRU. Fourthly, the struggles against dissent, emigration, and western radio stations broadcasting to the Soviet Union are the sole responsibility of the KGB but not the GRU. Naturally the most talented representatives of liberation movements and immigration address their best

efforts to enlightening the KGB itself. It is the same as regards radio station broadcasting to the Soviet Union and the Western organs of mass information in general. They certainly devote to the KGB significantly greater attention. Fifthly, any unpleasant things which happen to foreigners in the Soviet Union are first and foremost connected with the KGB and this gives rise to a corresponding flow of information about the KGB. Lastly, having made rivers of blood from the people, the KGB strove to whitewash itself at all costs advertising the 'attainments' of the Tchekists. In this connection all intelligence officers, KGB or GRU, were categorised as Tchekists, and this at a time when GRU intelligence officers hated the Tchekists many times more than they did the Gestapo. The GRU did not object to this. It preferred to maintain silence, not only about its crimes and mistakes, but also about its successes. The spying breed of animal keeps itself in the depths; muddy water and darkness are more to its liking than publicity.

Chapter Six

The GRU and the 'Younger Brothers'

The state structure of any communist country strikingly resembles the structure of the Soviet Union. Even if it finds itself in conflict with the Soviet Union or has been able to escape from its influence, it is much the same in character. The cult of personality is a general rule for all communist countries, and any 'big brother' needs an all-powerful secret police force to preserve that cult. Then there must be another secret organisation to counter-balance the power of the first one.

It is usually military intelligence which fulfils this counterbalancing role, the more so since all communist countries, regardless of the kind of communism they adopt, are warlike and aggressive. In a number of communist countries there would appear to be only one secret police organisation, but in these cases closer inspection will clearly show a minimum of two mutually hostile groupings. Sooner or later the dictator will be forced to split his secret service into two parts. In the countries within the orbit of the Soviet Union that separation has already been carried out, for all of them have been created in the image of the elder brother.

The military intelligence services of the satellite countries show great activity in the collection of espionage material, and all such material obtained is sent directly to the GRU. The fact is that the intelligence services of the satellite countries are even legally answerable to the Ministry of Defence of the Soviet Union. The military intelligence service of each Warsaw Pact country is subordinate to its chief of the general staff, but the chief of staff is in his turn subordinate to the chief of staff of the Warsaw Pact. Theoretically a general from any country of the Warsaw Pact may be appointed to this position. In practice of course there have only ever been Soviet generals appointed. One of them is already well known to us: the former chief of the GRU, General Shtemyenko. After the fall of Krushchev, Brezhnev, trying to please the Army, recalled the disgraced general from exile and reinstated him as a full general. As chief of staff of the Warsaw Pact, his direct superior was (and is) the High Commander of the United Armed Forces of the member-countries. To this post it has always been a Soviet marshal who has been appointed. First it was Konyev, then Grechko, after him Yakubovski and finally Kulikov. But the official title of all these marshals during the time they commanded the united forces was 'First Deputy of the Minister of Defence of the USSR — Commander-in-Chief of the United Armed Forces of the member countries of the Warsaw Pact'. In other words, the armies are the armies of several states subordinated to a deputy minister of defence in one of those states. There is

sovereignty for you. The USSR Minister of Defence, through his deputy, directs all the forces of staffs of the 'fraternal countries', including, of course, the military intelligence services of those countries, and we are not talking of close co-operation, but of direct subordination in the legal sense.

This is all very well, some sceptics will object, but after what happened in 1939, every Pole had a fierce dislike for the Soviet communists, and their intelligence services would hardly work their best in the interests of the GRU, would they? After 1953 the East Germans fully shared the feelings of the Poles. In 1956 Hungary joined them, and in 1968 the Czechs and Slovaks. Surely the intelligence services of these countries would not work hard in the interests of Soviet military intelligence? Unfortunately this is a delusion which has gained too wide an acceptance. In practice everything contradicts it. It is a fact that the peoples of all countries in thrall to the Soviet Union hate the Soviet communists; but none the less their intelligence services work to the full extent of their powers in the interests of the elder brother. The solution to the riddle is this. By means of harsh economic treaties the Soviet Union has enchained all its 'younger brothers'. For Soviet oil and coal, electric energy and gas they all have to pay very heavily. The Soviet Union proposes to its satellites that 'you may pay by means of your own wares or you may pay by providing the secrets of other people'. This alternative offer is a very tempting one, to which the general secretaries have unanimously responded by ordering their intelligence officers to redouble their efforts. So the intelligence services of all countries tied economically to the Soviet Union make the greatest possible efforts. By stealing Western secrets and transmitting them to Soviet military or political intelligence they reduce their countries' indebtedness and raise their peoples' standards of living. Western states have been surprised by the extent of the intelligence interests of communist states. Why should Mongolian intelligence be interested in atomic reactors, or Cuban intelligence in high-powered rocket engines? These questions are easily answered as soon as one realises that they are all part of one gigantic formation. In the ranks of officials of Soviet state institutions overseas it is almost impossible to find one 'clean' one. All Soviet citizens, from ambassadors to cleaning staff, in one way or another co-operate with the KGB or the GRU. The same thing is true of the official institutions of the 'fraternal countries'. There it is also difficult to find a single 'clean' official. All of them are to some extent co-operating with the Soviet KGB or GRU — even though frequently they themselves do not realise it.

Chapter Seven

The GRU and the KGB

The working methods of the GRU and the KGB are absolutely identical. It is impossible to tell their signatures apart. But their functions differ essentially one from the other. The basic function of the KGB may be expressed in one guiding phrase, not to allow the collapse of the Soviet Union from inside. Every specific function stems from this. To enumerate some of those functions: the protection of communist VIPs; the suppression of any clashes or dissent among the population; the carrying out of censorship and disinformation; the prohibition of any contact between the people and the outside world — including the isolation of foreign visitors — and the cutting off of any contacts already established with them; and the guarding of frontiers (there are ten districts of KGB frontier forces). The KGB also acts overseas but its activities rotate around the same main axis — to prevent the collapse of the USSR from within. This task can be divided in the same way into its parts: the struggle with emigration

and efforts to diminish its influence on the internal life of the Soviet Union; the struggle with Western radio stations broadcasting to the Soviet Union and other means of mass information which give a correct picture of the situation 'within the state of workers and peasants'; the struggle with religious organisations which might exert influence on the Soviet population; observing the 'fraternal' communist parties with the aim of nipping in the bud any heresy which might emerge from them; the surveillance of all Soviet citizens abroad, including KGB officers themselves; the seeking out and destruction of the most active opponents of the communist regime. The KGB also has other functions, but these are all either a part of the main function or not of prime importance.

The function of the GRU may also be stated in one parallel, but quite different phrase: to prevent the collapse of the Soviet Union from an external blow. In the opinion of the general staff such a blow may be struck at the Soviet Union in peacetime, even in the course of routine Soviet military adventures in Asia, Africa or Europe. This, the most important function of the GRU, is undertaken on four fronts. On the military front, literally everything is of interest to the GRU. Of prime importance, of course, are the composition, quantity and deployment of the armed forces of all countries of the world; the plans and thinking of the military leadership and staffs; mobilisation plans in case of war; the type and direction of military training of forces; the organisation of forces; the means of supply; morale and so on. Of prime importance on the military-political front are the relations between the different countries of the world: overt and covert disagreements; possible changes in political and military leadership of military and economic blocs; new alliances; any, even the slightest, change in the political and military orientation of armies, governments, countries and whole blocs and alliances. On the military-technological front the GRU handles intelligence related to the development of new kinds of armaments and military technique in the countries of a probable enemy; the carrying out of trials and tests; new technological processes which might be utilised for military ends. And the military-economic front presents exceptional interest for the GRU. First and foremost it is fascinated by the capacity of such and such a state or group of states to produce modern types of weapons, but it is also extremely keen to learn about industrial potential, energy, transport, agriculture, the presence of strategic reserves, vulnerable areas of economy, and energy. The general staff considers that if the GRU can give accurate information in good time from every country in the world on these four fronts, then it can count it impossible to destroy the Soviet Union by means of a blow from outside.

In many instances the interests of the KGB and the GRU are diametrically different. For example, a demonstration of White Russian emigres is of absolutely no interest to the GRU, but an object of the greatest possible interest to the KGB. And vice-versa: no military exercises are of any interest to the KGB residents, but they are of great interest to GRU residents. Even in those fields where the GRU and the KGB have what would seem to be interests in common, for example in politics, their approach to a particular problem would differ in essence. For example, the personality of President Carter from the very beginning provoked almost no interest from the side of the GRU, for on the most superficial possible examination of the President's personality the GRU infallibly decided that he would never be the first to carry out a pre-emptive strike against the Soviet Union. But that same man, from the point of view of the KGB, appears to be the most dangerous opponent possible, because his human rights policies are a weapon which could destroy the Soviet Union from within. In another case, the GRU displayed exceptional interest in the changes of personnel in the Chinese political and military leadership. For the KGB this question posed practically no interest at all. The KGB very well knows that after sixty years of communist power

the Soviet population will not be in the least interested in any communist ideology from China or Korea or Yugoslavia; it is also quite convinced that not one defector from the Soviet Union will ever seek refuge in China. China is, for the KGB, almost an empty place.

In examining mutual relations between the GRU and the KGB we have to return to the question of the GRU's dependence on the KGB. In the chapter on history we endeavoured to show the character of these mutual relations in the past. The same mutual relations have been preserved up to the present day. The GRU and the KGB are ready at any moment to destroy each other. Between them exist exactly those mutual relations which perfectly suit the Party. The jealousy and mutual hatred between the GRU and KGB are familiar to the police of every country where the Soviet Union has an embassy, and it is precisely this enmity, noticeable even to 'unarmed eyes', which provides proof of the independence of the GRU.

If the fate or career of a GRU resident were to depend even slightly on his colleague from the KGB, he would never in his life dare to differ with, still less quarrel or brawl with, the Tchekists: he would be like a cowed lap-dog with his tail between his legs, not even daring to bark for the lady of the house, like the 'clean' diplomats in all Soviet embassies. But officers of the GRU do not do this. They have guarantees of their independence and invulnerability from the KGB. Some specialists are inclined to consider the GRU as a branch of the KGB, usually adducing in defence of this opinion two arguments. Firstly, they say that the chief of the GRU is always a former KGB general, but this has always been the case, beginning with Aralov, and has never prevented the GRU from actively opposing the efforts of the KGB to swallow it, and even sometimes on the order of the Party striking the Tchekists sudden and heavy blows. The second argument is that everybody joining the GRU has to be vetted by the KGB. This argument appears convincing only at a first glance. The fact is that each new official of the Central Committee of the Party also undergoes the same vetting by the KGB, but it certainly does not follow this that the Central Committee is under the control of the KGB or is a branch of the KGB. Both the Central Committee and the GRU select for themselves the people necessary to them, and in this connection consult the KGB, for any person until he becomes a Central Committee official or joins the GRU is under the control of the KGB and possibly the KGB may have some unfavourable information on a given person. The KGB in this case plays the part of a filter. But once having passed this person through its filter the KGB no longer has the right to interfere with him, either inside the Central Committee or inside the GRU. The KGB is like a guard at the gate of a secret installation. The guard may refuse entry to an engineer who has forgotten his pass at home, but he has no right to examine the contents of that engineer's safe. If it so desires, the KGB may, of course, discredit any unwanted official of the GRU or the Central Committee. However, this is fraught with potential reciprocal measures.

There exists still another irrefutable indicator of the independence of the GRU from the KGB. In the GRU there is no 'special department'. The security of the GRU is assured by its own forces, and always has been. The Party is very keen that this should continue, because it knows that if the KGB were to organise its own 'special department' in the GRU, a similar department would swiftly be introduced into the Politburo.

To illustrate the uneasy peace and the paradox of the independence that exists within the triangle of Party — KGB — GRU, let us consider a real confrontation. The working day of the GRU chief usually begins at seven o'clock in the morning, sometimes earlier. At that time he personally reads all telegrams which have come during the night from illegals, from undercover residencies, and from the intelligence directorates of military districts, groups of forces and of the fleet intelligence. In the

next-door office, the first deputy to the GRU chief and the chief of information of the GRU are doing the same thing. If any questions have been raised by any of the higher commanders, from the chief of the general staff upwards, their opinions will be heard separately, independent from the opinions of the GRU chief.

This day began for the GRU leadership at the unusually early hour of 3.30 in the morning, when it was informed by the command point that the aircraft from Paris had landed at the central airport and taxied up to the GRU building. The day before, at Le Bourget airport, the Soviet supersonic passenger aircraft Tupolev TU144 had crashed. The whole of the Paris residency had been at the show and the majority had had cine cameras. The moment of catastrophe had been photographed from different points by different officers, and the GRU had at its disposal no fewer than twenty films showing the same moment. The films had not been developed in Paris but brought straight to Moscow. Now the operational technological institute of the GRU would develop them immediately. At nine o'clock in the morning the Politburo session was to begin, at which they would hear evidence from Tupolev, his deputies, the minister of aviation production, the director of the Voronesh aviation factory, directors of subsidiary concerns, test pilots and of course the GRU and the KGB. But at seven, the telephone rang and it was Andropov, at the time head of the KGB. 'Peter Ivanovitch, how are you?'

Peter Ivanovitch Ivashutin (present chief of the GRU) did not hasten to match the friendly tone. 'Well. How are you, comrade Andropov?'

'Peter Ivanovitch, don't be so official. Have you forgotten my name? Peter Ivanovitch, there is something I want to talk to you about. I hear you have got some films showing the catastrophe.' Peter Ivanovitch said nothing. 'Peter Ivanovitch, would you be very kind and give me just one little film? You know yourself that I have to make a report to the Politburo but I have no material. These shows are not of great interest to my chaps and unfortunately not one of them was there with a cine camera. Help me to get out of this mess. I need that film about the catastrophe.'

All service telephone calls to the GRU chief are relayed through the GRU command point. The duty shift of operators is always in readiness to prompt their chief with a necessary figure or fact, or to help him over a mistake in conversation. At this point the entire duty shift was frozen to the spot. Their help was not called for at all. The GRU chief remained silent for some time. The duty operators were quite certain that in a similar situation, the KGB would undoubtedly refuse if the GRU asked for its help. But what would be the decision of the GRU chief, an ex-colonel-general of the KGB and ex-deputy chairman of the KGB? Finally, in friendly, even tones he answered Andropov.

'Yuri Vladimirovich, I won't give you one film, I'll give you all twenty. Only I will show them at nine o'clock in the Politburo, and at ten o'clock I'll send my chaps over to the Central Committee to give you all the films.'

Andropov angrily slammed down the receiver. A concerted roar of laughter shook the walls of the underground command point. The senior operator, choking with laughter, entered the conversation in the log book.

(After Andropov became General Secretary of the Communist Party and Soviet Leader, Ivashutin still survived as GRU chief, because any attack from Andropov could easily have upset the fragile Party-Army balance with unpredictable consequences for Andropov himself.)

Chapter Eight

The Centre

Unlike the KGB, the GRU does not try to advertise itself, and its head office does not rise in the centre of the capital on its most crowded square. The head office of the GRU, although it is in Moscow, is by no means easy to find. It is enclosed from three sides by the central airport, the old Khodinka field. The aerodrome is surrounded on all sides by restricted buildings, among which are the offices of three leading aviation firms and one rocket construction firm, and the military aviation academy and the aviation institute. In the centre of these secret institutes the aerodrome carries on with its life as if half-asleep. Very, very rarely, in the middle of the night, a covered-up fuselage of a fighter aircraft is taken out of a hangar, loaded onto a transport aeroplane and transported somewhere into the trans-Volga steppe for testing. Sometimes another transport aircraft lands, goes up to the GRU building and unloads a foreign tank or rocket, after which everything becomes peaceful again. For two months of the year preparations are carried out for the grandiose military parades, and the roar of tank engines can be heard on the airfield. The parades finish, but the guarded area remains guarded, an empty field in the centre of Moscow patrolled by watchdogs. Not one civil aircraft or helicopter disturbs the quiet of Khodinka, only the watchdogs howl at night like wolves. How many of them are there? One loses count. No, from three sides it is impossible to get to the GRU. From the fourth side, too. On the fourth side there is the Institute of Cosmic Biology, with more dogs and electric barbed wire. A narrow little lane leads through a blind wall ten metres high, behind which is the 'Aquarium'. In order to penetrate into the inner fortress of the GRU one must negotiate either the area of the secret aerodrome or the area of the top secret institute.

The head office of the GRU is a nine-storey extended rectangle. On all sides the building is surrounded by a two-storey structure, the windows of which give onto the central courtyard. The external walls have no windows at all. The fifteen-storey building adjacent to the area also belongs to the GRU, although it is situated outside its external walls. Many families of GRU officers live here, and the building has a completely normal appearance and looks like an ordinary block of flats. Only a certain number of the flats, however, are used for living purposes; the others are used by the service for official purposes. The whole of the area, centimetre by centimetre, is under surveillance from the tele-cameras and patrolled continuously by gentlemen with big, fat faces. But even if it were not thus, a stranger there would be apprehended immediately. Any of the little old men seated on benches (minimum twenty years' service in the GRU) would immediately inform the necessary people if he saw something untoward. Nobody is allowed to bring a car into the GRU's inner area, not even the Minister of Defence or General Secretary. One is only admitted after passing through a special inspection and sophisticated electronic equipment. Nobody may bring in so much as a cigarette lighter, still less a briefcase. There must be no metallic object on your person, not even a belt-buckle — the GRU recommends braces. All necessities for work and life are to be found inside, including cigarette lighters and fountain pens. The GRU gives them out — after they have been checked, of course.

The chief of the GRU is subordinate to the chief of the general staff and is his deputy. Directly subordinate to the chief of the GRU are the GRU's command point, the deputy chief and a group of advisers. The organisational units constituting the GRU are directorates, directions, and sections. In units which are not directly concerned with the acquisition and processing of information there exist the divisions of directorates, departments and sections. The military rank of the chief of the GRU is

Army General. Under him are a first deputy and deputies. In the case where the deputy has several directorates under his command, his military rank will be colonel-general. If he only has one directorate, lieutenant-general. Chiefs of directorates are lieutenant-generals. The deputies of heads of directorates, heads of directions and departments are major-generals. The deputy heads of directions and departments, the heads of sections and their deputies are colonels. The rank-and-file members of sections are called senior operational officers and operational officers. The military rank of a senior operational officer is colonel, of an operational officer lieutenant-colonel.

An overwhelming number of GRU officers hold the military rank of colonel. This, however, does not at all mean that they are equal amongst each other. Between the colonel who fulfils the duties of a senior operational officer and the deputy head of a direction who is also a colonel there is a wide gulf. The high service ranks existing in the GRU do not preclude the appointment of a very young captain or senior lieutenant to the post of senior operational officer, either. The system adopted by the Soviet Army permits this. A captain may be an acting major, or a senior lieutenant may be an acting colonel. Seniority is judged not by the pips on the officer's shoulder, but by the position he holds.

In total the GRU has sixteen directorates: most of them have a number from one to twelve. Certain numbers do not exist and the directorate is simply called by its name, as for example the personnel directorate. Directions and departments forming parts of a directorate have numbers, for example '41 Direction' means the first direction of the fourth directorate. Directions and departments not forming part of a directorate have a single number with the letters GRU added, for example, the first department GRU. The hierarchy in the GRU is as follows. The chief of the GRU has one first deputy and seven deputies beneath him. He controls:

- i The Illegals Section. With the help of this section he personally directs effective illegals and agents about whom nobody knows. He also directs his own first deputy.

- ii First Deputy Chief of the GRU (colonel-general), beneath whom are all the procurement organs which provide information.

- iii The Chief of Information (colonel-general) in charge of all the processing organs of the GRU.

- iv The Chief of the Political Section (lieutenant-general).

- v The Chief of the Electronic Intelligence Directorate (lieutenant-general).

- vi The Chief of Fleet Intelligence (vice-admiral).

- vii The Chief of the Cosmic Intelligence Directorate (lieutenant-general).

- viii The Head of the Soviet Army Academy (colonel-general),

- ix The Head of the Personnel Directorate (lieutenant-general).

Chapter Nine

The Procurement Organs

All units of the GRU are divided in their designations into procurement, processing and support. The great majority of the procurement organs, the providers of information, are controlled by the first deputy chief of the GRU. They include the first directorate, which carries out agent intelligence on European territory, and consists of five directions, each of which carries out agent intelligence on the territories of several countries (each direction consists of sections which direct undercover residencies in one of the countries concerned); the second directorate with an analogous organisation carrying out agent intelligence in America, both North and South; the

third directorate, which carries out agent intelligence in Asia; and the fourth directorate, dealing with agent intelligence in Africa, and the Middle East. Each directorate contains about 300 high-ranking officers in the Moscow centre, and about 300 abroad. Besides these four directorates, there are also four directions which undertake the same duties. These directions do not form parts of directorates but are answerable to the first deputy chief. The first GRU direction carries out agent intelligence in the Moscow area and it has its influential representatives in all Soviet official institutions used by the GRU as cover: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of External Trade, Aeroflot, the Merchant Navy, the Academy of Sciences and so forth. These representatives fit their young officers into slots in the institution serving as cover and guarantee their smooth progress in their future activities. In addition some GRU officers, on their return from overseas, continue to work in their covering organisation and not in the head office. Using these officers, the first direction recruits foreign military attaches, members of military delegations, businessmen and representatives of aviation and steamship companies. The second direction carries out agent intelligence in the area of East and West Berlin, a gigantic organisation which again does not form part of a directorate. The third direction is concerned with agent intelligence in national liberation movements and terrorist organisations. Its favourite child until recently was the Palestine Liberation Organisation. The fourth department carries out agent intelligence work from Cuban territory against many countries, including the United States. In many respects the fourth direction duplicates the activity of the second directorate. It has unlimited power in the ranks of the Cuban intelligence service and with its help actively penetrates and endeavours to direct the activities of unaligned movements.

The GRU adheres to a different principle in running its illegals from the principle adopted by the KGB. Among its procurement organs there is no separate unit for directing illegals, and the GRU does not consider such a unit necessary. Each of the directorate heads and several of the direction heads have under their command sections of illegals. This permits them to run illegals and residencies under cover at the same time in the territories of groups of countries or entire continents. The directorate or direction head may at any moment use his illegals for carrying out a secret check of the undercover residencies. The first deputy to the chief of the GRU also has an analogous section under his command. Naturally, he has very high-quality illegals. The first deputy may use his own illegals for secret checks on undercover residencies, and also the illegals under the command of directorate and direction heads. Finally, the absolute cream of the illegals are run personally by the chief of the GRU through his own illegals section. He can use his illegals for the checking of everything and everybody, including illegals under the command of the first deputy.

There is a fifth GRU directorate, which is also concerned with procurement and controlled by the first deputy. However, its functions differ from those on the four directorates and four directions listed above. The fifth directorate does not carry out independent agent intelligence work but directs the activities of the intelligence directorates of military districts, groups of forces and fleets. This directorate is a kind of controller of vassals. Directly under its control are twenty intelligence directorates belonging to the military districts, groups of forces and fleet intelligence, the latter having in its turn four more fleet intelligence directorates beneath it. The number of secret agents and diversionary agents ultimately controlled by the fifth directorate exceeds the number of all the agents controlled by the first four directorates and four directions, and these agents operate on all the same territories where illegals, undercover residencies and agents of the above-mentioned directorates and departments operate. With their help the first deputy, or indeed the chief himself, may secretly check on the activities of his directorate. This arrangement works in reverse

too: with the help of agents of the first four directorates and four directions he can check the activities of the secret agents of military districts, fleets and groups of forces.

In addition to the proliferation of units outlined above, there are two more GRU directorates which are concerned with the procurement of information: the sixth directorate and the cosmic intelligence directorate. These directorates procure and partly process information, but they do not go in for agent intelligence, so they are not considered as purely procurement directorates and are not subordinate to the first deputy chief of the GRU. The chiefs of both these directorates answer to the chief of the GRU and are his deputies, but not first deputies.

The GRU sixth directorate is concerned with electronic intelligence. For this purpose its officers are posted to undercover residencies in the capitals of foreign states and there form groups which intercept and decipher transmissions on governmental and military networks. There are also many regiments of electronic intelligence on the territories of the Eastern bloc and Soviet Union, and these are integral parts of the sixth directorate. Furthermore, this directorate controls the electronic intelligence services of the military districts, groups of forces and fleets which in their turn have their own regiments, special ships, aircraft and helicopters for electronic espionage. The electronic espionage services of each military district, group and fleet correspondingly control similar services in the armies and flotillas, and these in their turn control those of the divisions. And so it goes on. All the information acquired from the electronic companies of divisions, electronic battalions of armies, regiments of military districts and groups of forces and spy ships of the fleet, is collected in the sixth directorate and analysed there.

The GRU cosmic intelligence directorate is no less powerful. It has its own cosmodromes, a number of research institutes, a co-ordinating computer centre and huge resources. It works out the technical details for spy satellites independently and prepares them in its own works. The Soviet Union has sent into orbit more than 2,000 cosmic objects for different purposes, and one in three of them belongs to the GRU. The vast majority of Soviet cosmonauts, with the exception of those who undertake only demonstration flights, work for half their time in space in the interests of the GRU. The KGB lies far behind the GRU in this respect.

Chapter Ten

Fleet Intelligence

The GRU fifth directorate directs twenty intelligence directorates of military districts and groups of forces directly, and four intelligence directorates of fleets co-ordinated by an organisation known as fleet intelligence. Fleet intelligence was introduced because each military district and group of forces has a very strictly denned sphere of responsibility in time of war, whereas the ships of the four Soviet fleets operate in widely scattered areas of the world's oceans and each ship must continuously have full information on the enemy. The chief of fleet intelligence comes under the GRU chief as a deputy, and he controls the four intelligence directorates of naval staff- Northern, Pacific, Black Sea and Baltic- and the fleet cosmic intelligence directorate and information service. In his day-to-day activities he is under the orders of the GRU fifth directorate.

Fleet intelligence directorates have a structure similar to that of the directorates of military districts. There are small differences caused by maritime factors, which for our purposes are insignificant, and the fleet intelligence directorates together with

those belonging to military districts will be examined in detail in Part II under the heading of 'Operational Intelligence'.

The GRU chief has at his disposal two independent cosmic intelligence services. One is beneath him directly, the GRU cosmic intelligence directorate, and the other through the chief of fleet intelligence. The Soviet High Command quite reasonably considers that, bearing in mind the tasks to be fulfilled, the fleet must have its own cosmic intelligence service. This of course does not exclude the GRU chief controlling his own cosmic intelligence service with the help of the other and vice-versa. Considering that not only the GRU cosmic intelligence service, but also that of the fleets has its own spy satellites, we may say that out of all the satellites put into orbit by the Soviet Union, about half are directly or indirectly subordinated to the GRU.

Chapter Eleven

The GRU Processing Organs

The GRU processing organs are sometimes called the information service or more frequently simply 'information'. The chief of information has the rank of colonel-general and is a deputy to the GRU chief. The following are under his control:

i the information command point; ii six information directorates; iii the institute of information; iv the information services of fleet intelligence; v the information services of intelligence directorates of military districts and groups; vi all the organisations of military intelligence listed below which are concerned with the processing of secret material acquired.

The information command point is second only to the GRU central command point. It receives all intelligence material coming from illegals, undercover residencies, agents, from cosmic and electronic intelligence and also from the intelligence directorates of military districts, fleets, groups of forces, and from the military intelligence services of the satellite countries. It has full power to ask any resident, agent or illegal, in fact any source of intelligence information, to give more precise details or to re-check information submitted. The information command point works without breaks, without days off, without holidays. It carries out all preliminary processing of all the material submitted; each morning at six o'clock it publishes a top secret 'Intelligence Summary' destined for members of the Politburo and the higher military command, and in the morning all material which has come to hand during the previous twenty-four hours is transmitted to the informational directorates of the GRU for detailed analysis.

In all, there are six directorates plus the information institute on the strength of the information service. The numbering begins of course with the seventh directorate which is concerned with a study of NATO in all its aspects. The directorate consists of six departments, each of which consists of sections. Each department and each section carries responsibility for the study of individual trends or aspects of NATO activities. The eighth directorate carries out studies of individual countries worldwide, irrespective of whether that country belongs to NATO or not. Special attention is paid to questions of political structure, armed forces and economies, and special emphasis is put on a study of the personal activities of statesmen and military leaders. The ninth directorate studies military technology. It is very tightly connected with the Soviet design offices and with the armaments industry, as a whole. It is the only link between the Soviet armaments factories copying foreign weapons and the residents of Soviet intelligence who obtain the necessary secrets. The tenth directorate studies military economics worldwide, carefully watching arms sales, studying production and

technological developments, strategic resources and vulnerable points. The idea of an oil embargo first saw the light of day in this directorate as a suggestion in the 'Locomotive Report' of 1954, when it was pointed out that, to wreck the 'locomotive of capitalism' it was not necessary to smash the engine, only to deprive it of a crucial ingredient. Immediately after this the Soviet penetration of the Arab nations began. Happily this stunning idea of the tenth directorate has not as yet been put into practice. The eleventh studies strategic concepts and strategic nuclear forces of all countries who possess such capabilities, or may in the future possess them. This directorate carefully monitors any signs of increased activity, any change in emphasis in the activities of strategic nuclear forces in any region of the globe. The officers of this directorate form the backbone of Soviet delegations to the SALT talks. Unfortunately we do not possess reliable information on the activities of the twelfth directorate.

The gigantic information institute functions independently of the directorates. It is controlled by the chief of information but operates outside the walls of the GRU. As opposed to the directorates, which base their analyses of the situation exclusively on secret documents obtained by agent, electronic and cosmic intelligence, the institute studies overt sources: the press, radio and television. The Western press is a veritable treasure house for Soviet intelligence.

The activity of each information directorate in many respects duplicates the activity of its neighbour directorates. The advantage of such a set-up is that it prevents a one-sided view and a subjective approach to problems. Directorates and sections look at problems in a narrow, parochial manner, giving their opinions not on the whole question but only on a part. A unified opinion is worked out by the head of information with the help of his best experts and the command point. Many reports from the procurement organs of the GRU are analysed simultaneously by several or even by all units of the information at the same time. Let us suppose, for example, that a case officer belonging to an undercover residency receives a short verbal report from an agent to the effect that a new jet fighter is in the process of being developed in the United States and no official announcement has as yet been made. Immediately after the meeting with the agent the case officer would send an enciphered telegram, one brief sentence, to Moscow. But the information command point has no other report on this question, nor any evidence to support it. The report would be published in the 'Intelligence Summary' under the heading 'unchecked and unconfirmed report'. The next morning all members of the Politburo and the higher military command would receive the volume printed during the night. At the same time all branches of information would be studying the report. The seventh directorate, trying to put itself in the shoes of NATO leaders, would endeavour to calculate what present and future value this fighter would have for NATO and, if it were really to be taken into service, how it would affect the balance of power in Europe and in the world. The question of which country of the United States' allies would be likely to buy such an aircraft would also be studied. Units of the seventh directorate would immediately start searching their archives for information on what NATO leaders have said about the future development of aviation. Simultaneously with this the eighth directorate responsible for individual countries including US studies would thoroughly research the question as to who insisted on the decision to develop a new aircraft; what forces in the country might come out against such a decision; which aviation companies might be drawn into the development of the aircraft by tendering for the contract; who would be likely to win and who to lose. The ninth directorate, on the basis of an analysis of the latest American achievements in the sphere of engine building, aerodynamics, aviation electronics, might be able to foretell the basic technical parameters of the aircraft. The tenth directorate would unerringly tell, on the basis of an analysis of

military orders, military budgets and the budgets of the country's main corporations, which aviation companies would actually be involved and to what extent. The eleventh directorate would study the problem from the angle of the aircraft's potential use as a carrier of nuclear weapons. It would be able to draw conclusions without knowing very much about the new aircraft, simply on the evidence of existing carriers of atomic weapons, their replacement in service, the quantity of nuclear weapons and plans for their utilisation. At the same time, the information institute would call up all overt publications which might have some bearing on the problem and present its own opinion to the information command point. And all residents, illegals, independently operating agents, intelligence directorates of military districts, fleets and army groups would receive appropriate orders to increase their activity with regard to the question. Such an order would also be received by the 'younger brothers'. By the evening reports of all the branches would be collected at the command point and be printed that night in the routine 'Intelligence Summary', amongst hundreds of similar reports already confirmed.

The GRU lays great stress on questions of training specialists for the information directorates. Alongside professional intelligence officers work the best specialists from a wide range of scientific, technical and industrial fields. The GRU has the right to co-opt any specialist from cosmic research or atomic energy, microbiology or computer technology, strategic planning or international relations. Such a right was accorded to the GRU by the Central Committee on the principle that it is better for the Soviet Union to be in the know about the most modern achievements of the United States, Japan, Great Britain, France and the Federal Republic of Germany than to work out its own. In conformity with this the GRU, during the most dramatic moments of the space race of the sixties, unceremoniously co-opted the leading Soviet specialists in the field of piloted cosmic flights and, with their help, monitored every step of the Americans' progress. It is evident that every Soviet programme was based on an American model, but launched days or even months before the Americans carried out theirs. As a result every record, including the first orbital flight, the first multi-seater spaceship, the first entry into outer space went to the Soviet Union. This state of affairs continued right up to the time when the adventurism of the Soviet programme produced a series of tragic accidents.

The information directorates of the GRU have at their disposal the highest quality electronic equipment produced by the best American firms, and the GRU leadership, not without reason, considers that the technical equipment of the processing organs of the GRU is vastly superior to that of comparable units within the CIA — in spite of the fact that some Western specialists have said that the GRU information service is not as effective as it should be. They base this on two facts: that in 1941 the GRU had all the data on the forthcoming German invasion but was unable to evaluate correctly the information it had, and secondly, that much of the intelligence material was reported to the higher command in a 'grey' unprocessed state. It is impossible to deny either of these facts, although one may complain that they belong to past history and not the present. If the GRU information service is truly less effective than it should be, the answer lies in the communist system itself. General Golikov did possess detailed German plans for the invasion, but Stalin was not of a mind to believe them. Two years before, he had twice liquidated the whole staff of Soviet military intelligence from the chief of the GRU downwards. So what more was Golikov to do? Thirteen years later, the new chief of the GRU, General Shtemyenko, found the solution. He ordered the publication of an intelligence summary each night, which would include 'grey', unprocessed information and unsubstantiated data. In this way the gallant general implied that 'this is not my opinion, it is the opinion of my residents'. The GRU chief and the head of information would only give their own opinion twenty-four hours

later in the next issue of the summary. (This stroke of genius on the part of the GRU was immediately adopted by the KGB too, which in the same way began to print 'grey' information each night and save its judgements for the following day.)

In a totalitarian state, every lower level is completely dependent on its superior, and there is no organ which can defend it from the caprices of its superior. This is the very essence of the Soviet Union, and this is why it is necessary for the leaders of Soviet intelligence to have recourse to such cunning. The system has been well-tried up to the present time and serves as a kind of lightning conductor. The chief of the GRU camouflages his own opinion, always adopting the position adopted by the general secretary of the Party at a given moment, and at the same time he is able to present the developing situation to the leadership in a most objective way, thus transferring all responsibility from his shoulders to the shoulders of his subordinates. The overseas intelligence organs, separated by thousands of kilometres from Moscow, cannot possibly know what opinion their rulers hold at a given moment. They are therefore forced to give simply objective material which can be directly reported to the higher command. Only in this way can the intelligence leadership exert any influence on its stubborn masters when the latter do not wish to listen to any opinion which contradicts their own.

But the totalitarian system still exerts a crushing influence on all branches of society, including the intelligence services. Nobody has the right to object to, or contradict, the supreme command. Thus it was under Lenin and Stalin and Krushchev and Brezhnev, and thus it will be in the future. Should the supreme command have an incorrect view of things, then no intelligence or information service can convince it otherwise; it does not dare. Nor does first-class American equipment help, nor the very best specialists. It is not the fault of the intelligence services, it is the system's fault. In cases where the supreme command is frankly deluded, as Stalin was in 1941, intelligence has absolutely no chance of influencing him and its effectiveness at that moment is nil.

However, it is not always like that. If the desires of the dictator and his intelligence service coincide, then the latter's effectiveness grows many times greater. In this case, the totalitarian system is not a brake but an accelerator. The dictator does not care at all for moral sides of a question. He is not at all answerable before society for his actions; he fears no opposition or discussion; and he is able to supply his intelligence service with any amount of money, even at a moment when the country is suffering from hunger. The GRU has carried out its most brilliant operations at exactly such moments, when the opinions of the dictator and the intelligence service coincided. And the information service has played a first-class role on these occasions.

Let us consider one example. During the Second World War a section of the tenth directorate (economics and strategic resources) was studying the trends in the exchange of precious metals in the United States. The specialists were surprised that an unexpectedly large amount of silver was allocated 'for scientific research'. Never before, either in America or in any other country, had such a large amount of silver been spent for the needs of research. There was a war going on and the specialists reasonably supposed that the research was military. The GRU information analysed all the fields of military research known to it, but not one of them required the expenditure of so much silver. The second reasonable assumption by the GRU was that it was some new field of research concerning the creation of a new type of weapon. Every information unit was brought to bear on the study of this strange phenomenon. Further analysis showed that all publications dealing with atomic physics had been suppressed in the United States and that all atomic scientists, fugitives from occupied Europe, had at the same time disappeared without trace from the scientific horizon. A week later the GRU presented to Stalin a detailed report on

developments in the USA of atomic weapons. It was a report which had been compiled on the basis of only one unconfirmed fact, but its contents left no room for doubt about the correctness of the deductions it made. Stalin was delighted with the report: the rest is well known.

Chapter Twelve

Support Services

All GRU organs which are not directly concerned with the provision or processing of intelligence material are considered as support services. It is not possible for us to examine all of these, but we will simply take briefly the most important of them.

The Political Department is concerned with the ideological monitoring of all GRU personnel. The military rank of the head of the political department is lieutenant-general and again he is a deputy to the GRU chief. As opposed to any other political departments the GRU political department is made up not of party officials but of professional intelligence officers. There are also several other differences. All political directorates and departments of the Soviet Army are subordinated to the chief political directorate of the Soviet Army, which is at the same time one of the Central Committee departments. The GRU political department, however, is subordinated directly to the Central Committee administrative department. The political department of the GRU has considerable weight in Moscow, especially as regards staff movements, but it has no right to interfere in intelligence work. It exerts practically no influence on the activities of overseas branches of the GRU. Overseas the residents are personally responsible for the ideological monitoring of their officers.

The Personnel Directorate is directly beneath the chief of the GRU. The head of the directorate, a lieutenant-general, is also a deputy to the chief of the GRU. The directorate is staffed only by intelligence officers who, in common with officers of the procurement and processing organs, the political department and other branches of the GRU, regularly go abroad for a period of several years and then return to work at domestic postings.

The personnel directorate has exceptional influence both in the GRU and outside. It directs the movements of all officers, not only inside the GRU, but in a number of satellites, in fleet intelligence, intelligence directorates of military districts and groups of forces too, and also in the intelligence services of Eastern bloc countries.

The Operational/Technical Directorate is concerned with the development and production of all espionage equipment and apparatus. Within its dominion fall several scientific research institutes and specialised undertakings. On the orders of the procurement organs the directorate prepares equipment for secret writing and micro-photography, several kinds of dead letter-box, radio appliances, eavesdropping material, armaments and poisons, to name but a few. Its head is a lieutenant-general, although he is not classed officially as a deputy.

The Administrative/Technical Directorate is in charge of foreign currencies and other items of value, gold and diamonds, for example. This directorate is the currency middle-man between the military industrial commission and the operational users. It controls all the currency resources of the GRU and also carries out secret speculative operations on the international market. Possessed of colossal currency resources, it frequently uses them in order to exert secret pressure on individual businessmen, statesmen and sometimes even on whole governments. No less important, it is responsible for the growth of capital belonging to the GRU and for the acquisition of 'clean' currency.

The Communications Directorate deals with the organisation of radio and other communication between the GRU and its overseas units. Needless to say, it controls several powerful reception and transmission centres of its own, but should the need arise to secure special channels of communication, in case of a worsening of operational conditions, for example, then it can make use of the services of the cosmic intelligence directorate, communicating with illegals and agents by means of GRU satellites.

The Financial Department: unlike the administrative/technical directorate, the financial department deals only with Soviet money, not with foreign currency. The financial department carries out legal financial operations in the Soviet Union.

The First GRU Department (Passport) studies passport regulations worldwide. In the pursuit of this esoteric duty it has the greatest collection in the world of passports, identity cards, driving licences, military documents, passes, police documents, railway, air and sea tickets. The department keeps maps of many thousands of frontier posts, customs and police posts, and so on. The department can at any moment say what documents are required at any given control point in the world, what sort of questions are asked, and what stamps are to be put on the passports and other documents. Within a few hours, it can forge the passport of any country to conform with the latest changes in the passport and visa regulations of that country, having at its disposal hundreds of thousands of blanks for new passports, identity cards and driving licences for every country in the world. In my experience, the preparation of the papers which will preserve one's true identity can be done in a very short time.

The Eighth GRU Department is the most secret of all the top secret units of the GRU. The eighth department possesses all the GRU's secrets. It is here that the enciphering and deciphering of all incoming and outgoing documents is carried out.

The Archives Department is possibly the most interesting of all the departments. In its cellars are millions of personal details and files on illegals, domestic officers, undercover residencies, successful recruitment of foreigners (and unsuccessful ones), material on everyone from statesmen and army heads to prostitutes and homosexuals and designers of rockets and submarines. In every file lies the fate of an individual, in every file there is an unwritten novel.

PART TWO

Chapter One Illegals

We can define an illegal as an officer of strategic intelligence performing the tasks of the Centre on the territory of a foreign state, who passes himself off as a foreigner but not as a Soviet citizen. Illegals are frequently confused with agents, but these are completely different things. The crucial difference is that the agent is an inhabitant of a foreign country who has been recruited by, and works in the interest of, Soviet intelligence, whereas an illegal is first and foremost a Soviet officer passing himself off as a foreigner. Sometimes some of the most valuable and deserving agents receive Soviet citizenship as an incentive and are awarded the rank of an officer of the GRU or the KGB, but even so, an agent remains an agent. However, in the occasional case when a foreigner has been recruited by Soviet intelligence and for some reason or other changes his appearance or name and continues his activities with false documents, then he is called an illegal agent.

Both the GRU and the KGB have their own illegal networks, but these are completely independent one from the other. Each organisation selects, trains, prepares, deploys and utilises its illegals as it sees fit. In the same way each organisation separately works out principles, methods of work and technical details of the illegal system separately. The system of running illegals is entirely different in the two services. In the KGB there is a special directorate of illegal activities. In the GRU, all illegals are trained in a training centre under the leadership of Lieutenant-General V. T. Guryenko. After their training, the illegals are put at the disposal of the heads of the four geographical directorates and are controlled personally by them. Thus each directorate head supervises a number of directions and separately a group of illegals. In order to help him, the directorate head can call on a small group of advisers consisting in the main of former illegals (though not 'blown' ones) who are ready at any moment, using false papers, to go to the target country and 'fine-tune' and help the activities of the illegal networks. Directorate heads themselves frequently travel abroad for the same reasons. A number of the more important illegals are directly controlled by the first deputy head of the GRU, and there is a cream who are under the personal supervision of the head of the GRU. Thus both one and the other have small groups consisting of the most experienced and successful illegals who have returned from abroad and who exercise supervision over the daily running of the illegals. If a young illegal begins to acquire really interesting information he is transferred from the control of the head of a directorate to that of the first deputy or, in the case of even greater success, to that of the head of the GRU himself. This is, of course, a very high honour, granted only to those who return information of a very high calibre -unprecedented or highly classified material which produces an intelligence breakthrough. Equally an illegal may be demoted for failing to produce the goods. In certain cases his grade may fall below that which is supervised by the head of a directorate and he will be supervised only by the head of a direction. This is a very critical stage for the illegal, although he may not even be able to guess that it has happened. If he is demoted to direction head level — and he is, of course, not informed about this -the next step could well be a recall to the Soviet Union, regarded by all intelligence personnel as the direst form of punishment. Recall to the Soviet Union is a particularly effective measure against any Soviet citizen serving abroad. It is all the same to them whether they are in Paris or in Pnom Penh. The only important thing is that they should not be in the Soviet Union, and transfer to the Soviet Union, even on promotion, is regarded as the tragedy of a lifetime.

The selection of potential illegals is carried out by each of the four geographical directorates independently. Candidates are selected on the basis of future requirements. In basic terms, officers of the Soviet Army and Navy are used who as yet may know nothing about the GRU. Sometimes experienced officers of the GRU are used, those who have completed the Military-Diplomatic Academy and have already worked in intelligence or in the information processing departments. Sometimes the GRU will select for illegal activities young Soviet citizens, mainly those who have completed linguistic courses in higher education. Higher education is an essential requirement, therefore the minimum age at which a recruit will begin his training is 21 to 23 years.

Although General Guryenko's organisation is called the Training Centre', not one Soviet illegal who has defected has ever been able to say exactly where it is. The name Training Centre seems simply to reflect the existence of one organisation occupied with one task. Either the organisation is constantly on the move, or a secluded little place is selected for each individual trainee, normally in the Moscow area where there are great numbers of dachas. The dachas for the training of illegals are well concealed among other governmental buildings, where outsiders are not to be

seen on the streets and unnecessary questions are not asked, but gentlemen of sporting appearance may be seen walking in pairs in the quiet shady avenues. The dacha provides an ideally isolated territory for training. In addition to the candidate and his family, two or three instructors also live in the dacha where they can immerse him completely and supervise him very carefully all the time. His wife is also trained but the children lead normal lives and will be held eventually as hostages. The internal fittings of the dacha are prepared very thoroughly and carefully. From the first day the candidate becomes accustomed to the circumstances in which he will be living and working probably for many long years. In this connection he wears the clothes and shoes, and eats the food, even smokes cigarettes and uses razor blades procured from overseas. In each room a tape recorder is installed which runs twenty-four hours a day while he is occupying the dacha. These tape recorders continuously broadcast news from the radio programmes of his target country. From the first day of his training he is supplied with the majority of papers and magazines. He sees many films and descriptions on video tapes of television broadcasts. The instructors, for the most part former illegals, read the same papers and listen to the same radio programmes and spend their time asking their pupil the most difficult questions imaginable with regard to what has been read. It is quite obvious that after a number of years of such training, the future illegal knows by heart the composition of every football team, the hours of work of every restaurant and nightclub, the weather forecasts and everything that is going on in the realm of gossip as well as current affairs, in a country where he has never been in his life. The instructional programme is tailor-made for each trainee, giving due consideration to his knowledge, character and the tasks which he will be called upon to perform in the future. Attention is obviously paid to the study of the language of the target country, to working methods and to a cover story.

Often, the illegal's wife also undergoes training. She as a rule works as the radio operator. The posting of a husband and wife together, leaving their children behind as hostages, is a very frequent occurrence. It is considered that maternal feelings are much the stronger and, with the wife posted, hostages are that much more effective. Perhaps more surprisingly, the wife also acts as a control for the GRU on her husband. She scrutinises his behaviour and sometimes may warn the GRU about his excessive interest in women or alcohol. On their return to the Soviet Union, husband and wife are subjected to a detailed individual debriefing on all aspects of their life abroad. If the husband and wife have decided to keep something secret from the GRU, their stories will eventually differ.

After as much as three or four years of intensive training, the illegal passes a state commission of top GRU and Central Committee personnel, and goes abroad. Usually his journey to the target country is effected through a number of intermediary countries. For example, a journey to the USA would go from the Soviet Union to Hungary to Yugoslavia to Cyprus, Kuwait, Hong Kong and Hawaii. At each stage, or most of them, he destroys documents with which he has entered the country and goes on under new documentation which has been prepared for him, either by other illegals or by the residencies under cover. The illegal will find these documents in a reserved hotel or a steamship cabin or in a letter through the post. At each stage he goes on to another cover story, becoming another man. He may have to live in one place for some months and study it so he can use his knowledge of the country in future cover stories. He does not stop over at all in some of the countries, only using his visit to cover his tracks. After some months he arrives at the country where he is to work. The first thing he does is to visit the city where he is supposed to have been born, gone to school, and married. He gets a job and works for a time, after which he returns to the Soviet Union, having finished the second stage of his training — the illegal probationary period abroad. This probationary period is divided as a rule into

one or two years, after which the third stage begins. On the basis of the experience he has gained, and the shortcomings which have come to light in the training, the illegal and his instructors work out a programme of training for a period which lasts another one or two years. After this he again undergoes state examinations, at which the head of the GRU or his first deputy have to be present. Then the illegal is placed at the disposal of one of the heads of directorates and again commences the operation for his roundabout journey to the target country. For operational purposes (though not for instructional purposes) much use is made of Finland as a window to the West. In the course of his operational journey, the illegal's stay in one of the intermediate countries may continue for several years. This stage goes by the name of the 'intermediate legalisation'. To take the case of an illegal whose target destination is Washington: he might pretend to be a refugee from Hungary escaped in 1956; this would mean periods of residence in Hungary to begin with, then Austria and Germany before he arrives finally in America. An eventual French illegal would be likely to make the journey via Armenia and Lebanon. Both would consolidate their nationality every step of the way. In the course of the 'intermediate legalisation', the illegal endeavours to acquire as many friends as possible, to go to work, to get hold of genuine papers and character and work references. At the end of these years of preparation, he at last appears in the country where he is to spend so many more years endeavouring to do it as much harm as possible.

The minimum age of an illegal clearly cannot be less than twenty-seven to twenty-nine, but usually he is older, on average about forty. This age suits the GRU very well for a number of reasons. A man of forty has a balanced, conservative approach to life. The stormy passions of youth have disappeared and he is less inclined to take ill-considered decisions, especially if he ever suffers the dilemma of whether to continue working or to go to the police. His children are sufficiently old to be able to live without their parents in the complete care of the GRU, but not old enough to live independently, and so they are ideal hostages. And in the event of mobilisation in the target country, he may well be able to avoid being called up for the army which would mean the breaking-off of relations and an end to his active working life.

On his arrival at his objective, the illegal sets about basic legalisation. He has been provided with good papers by the best forgers of the GRU on genuine blank passports. At the same time he is extremely vulnerable if he is not registered with the police or the tax departments. Any check may give him away and for this reason he endeavours to change jobs and places of work often to get his name onto as many company lists as he can and to acquire character references signed by real people. The ideal solution is for him to obtain new documentation from the police department under some pretext or another. Often he will marry another agent (who may already be his wife); she will then be given a genuine passport, and he will 'lose' his false one to have it replaced with a real one on the production of his wife's genuine document. The acquisition of a driving licence, credit cards, membership documents of clubs and associations are a vital element in 'legalising' the status of an illegal.

A vital role in the lives of illegals is played by cover stories, in other words concocted life stories. The basic or ground cover story is created on the basis of real events in the life of the illegal, only changing a few details. He keeps the date of his birth but of course changes the place of his birth. The dates of birth of his parents and relatives are also accurately recorded, usually along with the professions of his parents, dates of weddings and other details. The illegal is thus not telling an out-and-out lie but only a half-truth. He will not bat an eyelid when he tells you that his father served all his life in the army. The only thing is that he will not tell you in which army he served.

There is also the emergency cover story, which is the last line of defence of the illegal on having been arrested by the police. As its name suggests, this cover story is only to be used as a last resort when the illegal perceives that the police no longer believe his basic cover story. Designed to be used only when the illegal is in the hands of the police department, it is concocted in such a way that the details it gives should be impossible to check. For example, one illegal was arrested by the police while he was trying to obtain a new driving licence because a mistake had been found in his old one. He was subjected to questioning, as a result of which his basic cover story was found to be inaccurate. Then he went over to his emergency cover story and informed the police that he was a Polish criminal who had escaped from prison and bought a passport on the black market. During this time the GRU, not having received from the illegal his routine communications, informed the Polish authorities about the 'criminal'. The Poles published photographs of the criminal and applied to a number of countries for his extradition. However strange it may seem, the police believed the story and handed him over to the Polish Consul. It would have been easy to break the emergency cover story, if the police had only thought to invite a real Polish immigrant for a ten-minute chat with his supposed fellow countryman. Of course he would not have known more than ten words of the language. But for the police it was sufficient that he spoke their language and did not object to being handed over to the Polish Consul.

No less important than the cover story is the cover or the place of work and the type of employment which the illegal takes up in his life overseas. Soviet propaganda paints a grave picture of the intelligence officer playing the role of a colonel in the enemy general staff. But this is pure disinformation. Such a cover is unacceptable to an illegal for a number of reasons. Firstly, he must keep himself away from counter-intelligence and the police. He must be a grey, inconspicuous 'man in the street' such as millions would hurry past without noticing. Any officer on any Western general staff is continuously under scrutiny. Secondly, he must be professional in his field. In the general staff he would be exposed almost immediately. Thirdly, for such a cover his legalisation would have to be unacceptably protracted. He would certainly be asked about the military schools and academies where he is supposed to have been, the regiments in which he has served, and his acquaintances among the officers and staff. Fourthly, an illegal needs plenty of time and opportunity to meet whoever he wants to meet. If a colonel on the general staff consorted with prostitutes, homosexuals, stockbrokers, atomic submarine workers and bootblacks — all those multifarious people he needs to cultivate — he would be exposed within forty-eight hours. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the requirements of the GRU change with great rapidity. Today they are interested in documents from a certain department of the general staff and tomorrow from another. But our illegal is working in yet another department and all his attempts to have talks with officers of the first two departments have been met with a blank wall or cold suspicion. No, the kind of cover offered by such a role is neither feasible nor a great deal of use.

Much better for him to be an independent journalist like Richard Sorge, or an independent artist like Rudolph Abel, coming and going as he pleases. Today he is talking with the Prime Minister, tomorrow with prostitutes, the next day with professional killers and then with atomic weapon workers. If he doesn't want to work for three months, there is no problem. If he gets many thousands of dollars through the post, again no problem. It is part of his cover. There are better, of course. A garage owner, for example. He hires his staff and himself goes wherever he wants and for as long as he wants, or he stands at the window and takes the money. Thousands of people pass him every day -ballerinas and artists, senators and scientists — and colonels of the general staff. To one he gives money and instructions written in secret

writing, from another he receives reports. For the basic task of the illegal is not himself to penetrate secret targets, but to recruit agents for this purpose. This is his *raison d'être*.

An illegal residency is an intelligence organisation comprising a minimum of two illegals, usually the resident and a wireless operator, and a small number of agents (at least one) working for them. We already know that illegals themselves, without agents, are not able to obtain anything. Gradually, as a result of recruiting new agents, the residency may increase in size. More illegals may be sent out to the resident, one of whom may become his assistant. The GRU considers it counter-productive to have large residencies. Five illegals and eight to ten agents are considered the maximum, but usually the residencies are much smaller than this. In cases where the recruitment of new agents has gone well the GRU prudently divides the residency in two parts. Thereafter any contact between the two new residencies is of course forbidden, so that if one residency is discovered the other does not suffer.

Chapter Two

The Undercover Residency

The undercover residency is one of the basic forms of intelligence set-up for the GRU abroad. (It should be remembered that the undercover residency and the illegal residency are completely separate entities.) In every country where official Soviet representation exists there is a GRU undercover residency. It exists in parallel with, and is analogous to, the KGB undercover residency. Thus every overseas Soviet colony is invisibly divided into three organisations: the 'clean ones', that is the genuine diplomats and correspondents, and the representatives of external trade, civil airlines, the merchant navy, and Intourist, headed by the ambassador; the undercover residency of the GRU; and the undercover residency of the KGB.

Very often, the 'clean' personnel make no distinction between the KGB and the GRU and call them both dirty, 'savages', 'Vikings' or 'neighbours'. The more enlightened staff, like for example the ambassador, his senior diplomats and the more observant people, understand the difference between the two organisations, dividing them up as close neighbours (the KGB), who continually meddle in the day-to-day affairs of each person in the colony, and distant neighbours who take absolutely no interest at all in the day-to-day life of the Soviet colony (the GRU).

For the GRU undercover residency lives a secluded and isolated life. It contains significantly fewer employees than either of the other organisations. Normally in Soviet colonies up to 40 per cent of the people may be considered in the 'clean' category. (This of course does not prevent the majority of them, to a greater or lesser extent, from co-operation with both the KGB and the GRU; but they are not to be considered as professional intelligence officers.) Up to 40 or 45 per cent are officers of the KGB and only 15 to 20 per cent, in rare cases up to 25 per cent, are officers of the GRU. This does not however mean that the intelligence potential of the GRU apparatus is less than that of the KGB. The larger part of the KGB personnel is occupied with questions of security, that is with the collection of compromising material on Soviet people, 'clean' people including the ambassador, and their own colleagues in the KGB who have contact with foreigners and frequently with officers of the GRU. Only a small proportion, in optimum cases half of the KGB personnel, are working against

foreigners. The GRU, on the other hand, directs its entire potential against foreigners. When one adds to this the unequalled financial power of the GRU, vastly in excess of that of the KGB, it becomes clear why the most outstanding operations of Soviet intelligence have been mounted not by the KGB but by the GRU.

The minimum number of staff for any GRU undercover residency is two — the resident and a combined radio/cipher officer. Such a theoretical minimum exists also for the other organisations, the KGB and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Theoretically the Soviet colony in a very small country may consist of six people, three of whom, the ambassador and two residents, are diplomats, and the other three radio/cipher officers. Each of the three branches of the Soviet colony has its own enciphering machine and completely independent channel of communication with Moscow. Equally, each has its own boss in Moscow—the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the chairman of the KGB or the head of the GRU. Supreme arbitration between them can only be carried out in the Central Committee, which in its turn has an interest in fanning the flames of discord between the three organisations. The Central Committee has the right to recall any ambassador or resident and this same Central Committee has to decide questions as to which slots, and how many, should be accorded to each of the three organisations. This is a difficult task, as the Committee must not offend the KGB on questions of security, on the shadowing of its own diplomats above all, nor must it offend the GRU, for without the acquisition of data on present-day technology the quality of the Soviet Army would remain static. Finally it must not offend the 'clean ones'. They also must have a sufficient complement to serve as a screen for the dark activities of the two residencies.

This is why Soviet embassies, consulates, trade representations and so on grow and multiply and swell. As the residency grows, the resident acquires several deputies in place of the one he had at first. The number of radio/cipher officers increases. A technical services group is organised, an operational group, a tech-ops group, a radio monitoring station on the networks of the police and counter-intelligence. The number of operational officers engaged directly in recruiting and running agents increases. In the very biggest residencies of the GRU, such as that in New York, there may be from seventy to eighty officers. Medium-sized residencies like that in Rome would contain between thirty and forty officers. All officers on the staff of a residency are divided into three categories — operational staff, technical-operational staff and technical staff. The operational staff are those officers who are directly concerned with recruiting and running agents. In the operational staff are included residents, deputy residents and operational officers. To the technical- operations staff belong those officers who are directly concerned with and responsible for the production of intelligence, but who do not have personal contact with agents, nor often with foreigners at all. These are radio/cipher officers, officers of the technical services and operational technical services and the operators of the radio monitoring post. To the technical staff belong chauffeurs, guards and accountants.

The Resident

He is the senior representative of the GRU in any given place, and answerable only to the head of the GRU and the Central Committee. He is the boss of all GRU officers and has the right to send any of them, including his own deputies, out of the country immediately. In this case he does not even have to justify his decision, even in front of the head of the GRU and the Central Committee. The resident is completely responsible for security, both as regards the work of each of his individual officers and recruited agents, and the security of the residency as a whole. He is chosen from among the most experienced officers and as a rule must have a minimum of three to five years of successful work as an operational officer and three to five years as the deputy resident before his appointment. A resident in a large residency will hold the

military rank of major-general, in medium and small residencies that of colonel. This does not mean that a lieutenant-colonel cannot be appointed resident, but then, according to the GRU system, he will be paid a full colonel's or major-general's salary and, if he copes successfully, will have to fill posts commensurate with the higher rank. He is not afterwards permitted to return to a post ordinarily filled by a lieutenant-colonel.

The deputy resident serves as the resident's assistant and assumes his responsibilities when he is absent. He undertakes the duties given to him by the resident and carries on recruiting work in the same way as all other operational officers. Frequently a deputy resident heads teams of officers working in one or another specialised field. Sometimes the resident himself supervises the most experienced operational officers and the deputy residents the younger, less experienced officers. In some very large residencies, and also sometimes where there is great activity on the part of GRU illegals, there is a post called deputy resident for illegals. The undercover residency and the illegal residency are completely separate and the undercover residency has no idea how many illegals there are, or where or how they work. At the same time, on instructions from the Centre, the undercover residency continually gives them help and support, placing money and passports in dead-letter boxes, emptying dead-letter boxes for them, studying conditions and clarifying certain important questions. Very often the undercover residency is used to rescue illegals.

The military rank of any deputy resident is full colonel. At the same time the same rules apply as apply to residents. The deputy resident may be a lieutenant-colonel or even a major; however, from the administrative and financial points of view he is a full colonel with full rights.

The Operational Officer

This is a GRU officer who carries out the recruitment of agents, runs them and through them receives or acquires the secret documents and samples of weaponry and military technology. Every operational officer from the moment of his arrival in the country is obliged to recruit a minimum of one agent, as well as often having to take charge of one or two other secret agents who have previously been recruited by his predecessors. He must keep these agents and increase their productivity. An identical burden is placed on the deputy resident at the same time as he is fulfilling the obligations of a deputy. This system is applied in all small residencies. In medium-sized residencies, the resident himself may take a direct interest in recruitment or not as he wishes. The residents of very large residencies are exempted from personal recruitment.

Alongside his recruitment work, the operational officer carries on with the acquisition of intelligence material by all possible means. He converses with foreigners, travels around the country and reads the press avidly. However, the GRU's over-riding view is that recruitment work is the most important part of an officer's duty, and it calls it number one (in addition to certain other colloquial words). All other work- support and the performing of operations for others, however important- is known as zero. One may be added to zero if a 'zero' agent manages to recruit a foreigner, in which case he becomes a '10', which is clearly the best number to be. For this reason an operational officer who has been abroad for three years and not recruited a single agent, even if he has achieved outstanding success in collecting the most interesting intelligence material, is considered to be idle. According to the standards of the GRU, he has sat for three years doing absolutely nothing and therefore hardly merits consideration for another overseas posting.

The military rank of an operational officer is lieutenant-colonel or colonel but in practice he may be a major (as I was) or captain, or even a senior lieutenant. If he is

successful in his recruitment work he stays on at this level receiving automatic promotion according to the length of time served. If he does not manage to recruit any agents, he is deprived of all his colonel's privileges and again becomes an ordinary senior lieutenant or captain and has to compete for promotion in the ordinary way, as automatic promotion is not granted to unsuccessful officers.

The military ranks prescribed for undercover residencies are also applicable for illegal residencies, with the sole difference that the illegal resident may be a major-general having many fewer people under his command than the resident of the undercover residency.

The Radio/Cipher Officer

Although he is an officer of technical operational staff, and his military rank is not usually higher than that of major, the radio/ cipher officer is the second most important person in the residency. He is not only responsible for cipher matters, the storage and use of ciphers and cipher machines, but also for the transmission and reception of enciphered cables and the storage of all secret documentation in the residency. The radio/cipher officer possesses all the secrets of the residency and since he deciphers communications from Moscow he knows the news even earlier than the resident. Nobody, including the ambassador and the KGB resident, at any time or under any pretext has the right of access to his room. They do not even have the right to know the number and types of cipher machines installed there. These restrictions also apply to GRU deputy residents. Even during periods when the resident is away and the deputy resident is acting for him he does not have the right to go into the radio/cipher operator's room or to ask him any specific questions which have a bearing on his work. Only the resident may exercise any control over the cipher officer, and he pays for the privilege because the cipher officer is the only man in the residency who is entitled to communicate with Moscow without the knowledge of the resident. He can send a cable containing an adverse report about the resident of which the resident himself will know nothing. It is the duty of the cipher officer to exercise silent watch over the behaviour of the resident, and if there is any shortcoming he must report it. In small residencies, where there is only one radio/cipher officer, only the resident may replace him should he become incapacitated for any reason. If both the resident and the cipher officer should become incapacitated at the same time then the deputy resident and the whole residency will remain completely cut off from the Centre. Naturally the ambassador's and the KGB's channels of communication can be used, but only in order to inform the GRU in a very general way. It is natural therefore that great care is taken of cipher officers (this is just as true of the KGB as the GRU). Draconian living conditions are imposed on all cipher officers. They are only allowed to live in official Soviet embassy accommodation guarded around the clock. Neither the cipher officer nor his wife is allowed to leave the guarded territory independently or unaccompanied. They are at all times led by an officer who enjoys diplomatic immunity. Neither the officer nor his wife is allowed near places where foreigners are to be found. Even if these foreigners are Bulgarians or Mongolians and are on guarded territory belonging to a Soviet embassy, the restriction remains in force. The cipher officer is not allowed in the same room with them even though he may be silent and in the company of his resident. He and his family must have a diplomatic escort on their journey out from the Soviet Union and on their return. During the time of his assignment abroad, he is forbidden all leave. It is easy to see why cipher officers are not posted abroad for longer than two years.

Of course those cipher officers who have served their whole lives on the territory of the Soviet Union deeply envy those who have had postings abroad, no matter where; and those who have been abroad will give their right arms to get another posting abroad, no matter where — Calcutta, Shanghai or Beirut. They will agree to any

conditions, any climate, any restrictions on their family lives, for they have learnt with their mother's milk the rule that overseas life is always better than in the Soviet Union.

Technical Services (TS) Officer

They are concerned with electronic intelligence from the premises of official Soviet premises, embassies, consulates, and so on. Basic targets are the telecommunications apparatus of the government, diplomatic wireless communications, and military channels of communication. By monitoring radio transmissions, secret and cipher, technical services groups not only obtain interesting information but also cover the system of governmental communications, subordination of the different components of the state and the military structure.

The military ranks of technical services officers are major and lieutenant- colonel.

Radio Monitoring Station Officers

In contradistinction to TS officers, these are concerned with monitoring the radio networks of the police and security services. The technical services and the radio monitoring station are two different groups, independent of each other, both controlled by the resident. The difference between them is that the technical services work in the interests of the Centre, trying to obtain state secrets, but the monitoring station works only in the interests of the residency trying to determine where in the city police activity is at its highest at a given moment and thus where operations may be mounted and where they should not be mounted. Groups for the study of operational conditions are made up of the most junior officers who will eventually become operational officers and be sent out on independent recruitment work. These are small groups who continually study the local press and police activities, endeavouring to obtain by means of isolated snippets a general picture of the police work in a given city and country. Besides their scanning of police reports for an ultimate overview, they also minutely study and analyse, for example, the numbers of police vehicles which appear in newspaper pictures or the surnames of police officers and detectives. Sometimes this painstaking work brings unexpected results. In one country a keen journalist on a small newspaper reported a police plan to install secret television cameras in order to survey the most highly populated parts of the city; this was enough for the GRU to become interested and to take corresponding measures. Within a month the GRU resident was able to say with conviction that he was fully informed with regard to the police system of control by television and this enabled the whole residency successfully to avoid traps laid for them for several years. The military ranks of officers of these groups are senior lieutenant and captain.

The Operational Technical Group

This is concerned with the repair and maintenance of photographic apparatus, photocopying equipment and the like. At the disposal of the group there are dead-letter boxes of all types, radio transmission stations, SW (secret writing) materials, microphoto-graphy and micropantography. The officers of this group are always on hand to give the necessary explanations to operational officers and to instruct them on the use of this or that instrument or method. These officers continually monitor television programmes and collect useful items on video tape, giving to Moscow material it could not get from any other source. The officers of the group, together with the officers of the group for the study of operational conditions, are widely used for the security of agent operations, the carrying out of counter-surveillance, signals organisation, dead-letter box operations and so on.

Technical Personnel

Only the very largest residencies contain technical personnel. Drivers are only allocated to residents who hold the rank of general. However, many generals, in an effort to be indistinguishable from other diplomats, dispense with the services of

drivers. The military rank of a driver is an ensign. However, sometimes an operational officer is to be found in the guise of a driver and he, of course, has a much superior rank. This is a widespread method of deception, for who would pay attention to a driver?

Some residencies, especially those in countries where attacks on the embassy cannot be excluded, have a staff of guards besides the KGB guards who are responsible for the external protection of the building. The GRU internal security guards consist of young Spetsnaz officers in the rank of lieutenant or senior lieutenant. The internal security guards of the residency may be deployed at the request of the resident in countries where KGB attempts to penetrate the GRU get out of hand. The internal security guards answer directly to the resident or his deputy. Naturally they do not take part in agent handling operations.

An accountant, in the rank of captain or major, is employed only in those residencies where the normal monthly budget exceeds one million dollars. In other cases the financial affairs are the concern of one of the deputy residents.

In our examination of the undercover residency, we have naturally to examine its cover, the official duties used by KGB and GRU officers to camouflage their secret activities. Without exaggeration it may be said that any official duty given to Soviet citizens abroad may be used to mask officers of intelligence organisations: as ambassadors and drivers, consuls and guards, dancers, writers, artists, simple tourists, guides and stewardesses, heads of delegations and simple section heads, UN employees and priests, intelligence officers conceal their true functions. Any person who has the right of official entry and exit from the Soviet Union may be used for intelligence tasks, and the vast majority of these are in fact only occupied in intelligence work. Some types of cover provide better possibilities, some worse. Some are used more by the GRU, some more by the KGB. Let us look at the basic ones.

The embassy is used to an equal extent by both organisations. Both residents and their deputies are in possession of massive amounts of information which would expose them to an un-acceptably high risk of arrest. For this reason the KGB resident and his colleague from the GRU, and usually their deputies too, are bearers of diplomatic passports, that is, they work officially in the embassies. Other officers of both organisations give themselves out as embassy diplomats too. They all prefer to concern themselves with technological and scientific questions, and questions of transport and communications; they are rarely found in cultural sections. The consulate is entirely KGB. You will almost never find officers of the GRU there and only very rarely genuine diplomats. This is because all exit and entry from and to the Soviet Union is in the hands of the KGB. KGB officers in the consulate issue visas, and the frontier forces of the KGB then control them later on. Every aspect of immigration and of flight and defection has some connection with consular affairs, which therefore rank extremely high in the KGB's sphere of interest. So it follows that the percentage of KGB officers in consulates is unusually high, even by Soviet standards. (There do exist very rare instances of GRU officers working in consulates. The KGB only agrees to this on the grounds of practical considerations, and so that it should not appear to be too one-sided an organisation.)

Aeroflot, the Soviet civil airline, is the exclusive domain of the GRU. This can be explained by the fact that aviation technology is of extreme interest to the Soviet armaments industry, and there is huge scope for any Aeroflot employee to inform himself about the progress of the West: international exhibitions, meetings with representatives of the leading aviation and space corporations, perfectly justifiable

meetings with representatives of firms producing aviation electronics, oils, lubricants, fuels, high-tension materials, heat isolators and aero-engines. Usually the firms which produce civil aircraft also produce military aircraft and rockets, and in this field lie the GRU's richest pickings. Happily, those officers whom the GRU selects at advanced aviation institutes for work in Aeroflot do not need lengthy specialist instruction. Sometimes Soviet military and civil aircraft have identical parts. KGB officers are only rarely employed at Aeroflot, and then for the same reasons as the GRU in consular affairs. The merchant navy is almost identical, the only difference being that the officers there are selected to study cruisers and submarines and not strategic aviation. An organisation of exceptional importance to both services is the Trade Representation, that is the organ of the Ministry of External Trade. Literally swarming with KGB and GRU officers, this organisation provides exceptional access to business people whom both strive to exploit for their own ends. Representation in Tass, APN, Pravda and Izvestia are almost forbidden ground for the GRU. Even the KGB in this field has very narrow powers. Press matters are very carefully kept in the Central Committee's own hands, therefore KGB officers and officers of the GRU do not occupy key posts in these organisations. This does not mean of course that their secret activities suffer in any way.

Intourist is in the KGB's hands, so much so that it is not just an organisation strongly influenced by the KGB, but an actual branch of the KGB. Beginning with the construction of hotels and the putting of advertisements in the papers, and ending with the recruitment of foreigners in those same hotels, it is all run entirely by the KGB. GRU officers are found in Intourist, but rarely. There does exist, however, one rule which admits of no exceptions. Anything to do with the military attaches is staffed exclusively by officers of the GRU. Here there are no genuine diplomats, nor KGB. The naval, military and air attaches are regarded by the GRU as its particular brand of cover. In the West one is accustomed to see in these people not spies but military diplomats, and one assumes that this has spread to one's Soviet colleagues. This deep misapprehension is fully exploited by the GRU. Whenever you talk to a Soviet military attache, remember always that before you stands at the very least an operational officer of an undercover residency who is faced with the problem of recruiting foreigners and who, if he does not recruit a single foreigner, sees all his other work become insignificant and all his hopes of a shining career crash to the ground. Look into his eyes and ask him how much longer he has to serve in this hospitable country and if in his answer you perceive a note of anguish, then be on your guard, for he will recruit you if he can. But perhaps he is happy with life and his eyes express pleasure. This means he has recruited one of your fellow- countrymen. Possibly there even stands in front of you a deputy resident or the GRU resident himself. Fear him and be careful of him. He is dangerous. He is experienced and cunning like an old hand should be. This is not his first time abroad, and that means he has already chalked up a significant number of successful recruits.

Every GRU officer in an undercover residency, whatever his official duties may be, and under whatever cover he masquerades, has his place in the general structure of the secret hierarchy. What we see in daily life is only the performance the GRU wishes to show us. Internal relations in an undercover residency have no bearing whatsoever on external, official ranks. Military ranks play an insignificant role. The important role is the actual job of the officer in the residency. There have been cases where residents with an eye to cover have occupied completely insignificant posts within embassies. At the same time the resident remains the resident and his authority is unshakeable.

Within the residency he remains the strict, tyrannical, frequently wilful boss who during his briefings will frequently attack the military attaches — even though in his life as seen by the outside world he plays the part of doorman for those same attaches. The second most important person, the deputy resident, may only be a lieutenant-colonel with operational officers who are colonels but this does not prevent him from talking to them as he would to captains or lieutenants. They are only operational officers, while the GRU has decreed that he, a lieutenant-colonel, is better than them, full colonels though they may be, and has given him full powers to dispose of them and order them about. Official cover again plays absolutely no part. An operational officer may assume the official duty of assistant to a military attaché or military attaché himself, but still have the deputy resident as his own personal driver. The deputy resident is no way suffers from this. His situation is analogous to that of the Sicilian waiter who, off duty, is senior in rank to the restaurant owner within the Mafia hierarchy.

All operational officers are legal equals, from senior lieutenants to full colonels. Their seniority in the residency, however, is established by the resident exclusively on the basis of the quantity and quality of their recruitments. Recruitment work is the sole criterion for all GRU officers, regardless of age, rank or official duties. Their relations with each other in the residency might be compared with the relationships existing between fighter pilots in time of war. They also, in their own circle, pay little attention to length of service or military rank. Their criterion of respect for a man is the number of enemy aircraft he has shot down, and a lieutenant who has shot down ten aircraft may patronisingly slap on the shoulder a major who has not shot down a single aircraft. The attitude of the operational staff engaged in recruitment work to other officers may be summed up by comparison with the attitude of the fliers and the ground staff at a fighter base: 'I fly in the sky and you shovel shit.' The only exception to this attitude is the radio/cipher officer, to whom all show the greatest respect, because he knows much more about intelligence matters concerning the residency than the deputy resident.

Let us take a typically large residency as an example and examine it. Everything is factual. The resident is a Major-General A and his official cover (relatively unimportant), is First Secretary, Embassy. Directly beneath him are a group of five radio/cipher officers, three very experienced operational officers (one of whom runs an agent group, and two others who run especially valuable agent-sources), and four deputy residents. They are:

Colonel B, cover Deputy Trade Representative. He has twelve GRU officers below him, all working in the Trade Representation. He is in contact with one agent. One of his officers runs an agent group of three agents. Another is in contact with two agents and a third officer has one agent. The remaining officers have as yet no agents.

Lt-Colonel C, cover Assistant to the Naval Attaché. He has many operational officers beneath him, two of whom work in the Merchant Navy Representation, three in Aeroflot, five in the Embassy and ten in the departments of the Military, Naval and Air Attachés. All three of the military departments are considered to be a diplomatic unit independent from each other and from the Embassy. However, in this case, all officers entering the three military departments including the three attaches are beneath one assistant military attaché. The deputy resident is in contact with one agent. Twelve other operational officers subordinate to him have one agent each. The remainder have acquaintances who are to be recruited within one to two years. In addition to his

agent-running work, this deputy resident is responsible for information work in the whole residency.

Colonel D, cover First Secretary, Embassy (deputy resident for illegals). This deputy resident has no agent and does not carry out recruitment work. He has no officers beneath him, but when he is carrying out operations in the interests of illegals, he can make use of any of the best officers of the first and second groups.

Lt-Colonel E, cover Second Secretary, Embassy. He is in contact with one agent. One operational officer is subordinate to him, disguised as the military attache's driver, and this officer runs an agent group. In addition, this deputy resident controls the following: one technical service group (six officers), one group for the study of operational conditions (four officers), one group of operational technique (two officers), the radio monitoring station (three officers), five officers of the internal security guards for the residency and one accounts officer.

In all there are sixty-seven officers in the residency, of whom forty-one are operational staff, twenty operational technological staff and six technical staff. The residency has thirty-six agents, of whom twenty-five work independently of each other.

In some cases part of the undercover residency, under the command of one of the deputy residents, functions in another city permanently detached from the basic forces of the main residency. This is true, for example, of Holland, where the undercover residency is located in The Hague but part of the residency is in Amsterdam. Such an arrangement complicates work to a considerable degree but in the opinion of the GRU it is better to have two small residencies than one big one. In this case any failure in one of the residencies does not reflect on the activities of the other. Everywhere it is possible, the GRU endeavours to organise new, independent residencies. For this it has to observe two basic conditions: the presence of official Soviet diplomatic representation — an embassy, consulate, military attache's department, military communications mission or a permanent UN mission; and the presence of an officially registered radio station in direct contact with Moscow. Where these two conditions obtain, residencies can be quickly organised, even the very smallest possible, consisting of two men but independent and self-contained.

Apart from the security angle, this practice also ensures parallelism, as the GRU can control one resident by means of another. Such possibilities are open to Soviet intelligence in many countries. For example, in Paris there is one of the most expansionist undercover residencies of the GRU. Independent of it in Marseilles there is another, smaller residency. Their performance is vastly enhanced by the fierce competition between them. In West Germany the GRU has been able to create five residencies. Wherever there is official Soviet diplomatic representation with radio transmission, there is also an undercover residency of the GRU. In many cases there is also an undercover residency of the KGB. But while the residencies of the GRU are organised in any official mission — civil, military or mixed — those of the KGB are not. In Marseilles, New York, Amsterdam, Geneva and Montreal the Soviet missions are clearly civil, and in all these cities there are undercover residencies of both KGB and GRU. But where the mission is clearly military, as for example the Soviet observation mission in West Germany, the KGB may not have a residency. This also applies to the numerous missions of Soviet military advisers in developing countries. The KGB presence there is only for the maintenance of security among the genuine military advisers.

In speaking about the undercover residency we must not forget to mention another category of people participating in espionage activities — co-opted personnel. These are Soviet citizens abroad who are not officers of the GRU or the KGB, but fulfil a number of tasks set them by these organisations. The co-opted person may be of any rank from doorman to ambassador and he carries out very different tasks, from studies of the foreigners surrounding him to clearing dead-letter boxes. The KGB has always been interested in the exploitation of co-opted persons; following the principle of 'don't stick your own neck out if you can get somebody else to stick it out for you'. The GRU is not so keen, using co-opted persons only in exceptional cases. Its guiding principle is: 'don't trust even your best friend with your motor car, girlfriend — or agent'. The rewards for a co-opted person are monetary ones which, unlike the basic salary, are not subject to tax. Usually in every embassy, consulate and trade representation, out of every ten 'clean' officials, seven are co-opted onto the KGB staff, one onto the GRU staff; only the remaining two are clean. Either they are complete idiots, or the sons of members of the Central Committee whom wild horses could not force to have anything to do with intelligence. In other words, in Soviet official institutions, it is a very, very tricky matter indeed to meet a man who has no connections with intelligence.

Chapter Three

Agents

In present-day Soviet intelligence terminology the term 'agent' has only one meaning. An agent is a foreigner recruited by Soviet intelligence and carrying out secret tasks on its behalf. All agents, irrespective of the group or section of the GRU to which they belong, are divided into two groups: the basic agent and the supplementary agent. Basic agents fall into four categories: they are residents or group leaders; they are providers of information; they are executive agents whose main task is to kill; or they are recruiting agents. In the supplementary group are wireless operators, legalising agents, documentalists, the owners of safe houses, addresses, telephones and radio transmission points.

Head Agents

Head agents are the leaders of agent groups and agent residents. Head agents are selected from the most experienced agents available, men and women who have had long years of service and have given proof of their devotion to duty. They are invested with wide powers and possess significant financial independence. In cases where the organisation entrusted to them collapses, the head agent must take the decision to do away with unwanted people who pose a threat to it. In this and other emergencies he can always count on the full support of the GRU.

The difference between the group leader and the agent resident is that the group leader may take a whole range of important decisions concerning the group entrusted to him, but he may not recruit agents at all. The agent resident has a wider range of interests, the most important being recruitment. The group leader may be subordinate to the residency, to the illegal, undercover or agent residency or directly to the Centre, but the agent resident may only be subordinate to the Centre.

Sources

These are agents who directly obtain secret information, documents or samples of military technology and weaponry. In the recruitment of such people, it is first and foremost their access to political, military, technological and other secrets which is taken into account. It is clearly unnecessary to recruit an officer from the Ministry of

Defence if one can recruit his secretary. In other words, the GRU has contact with people occupying relatively unimportant posts but with possibly greater knowledge than their superiors. With this in mind, apart from secretaries, the people of special interest to the GRU are workers in printing and typing offices which produce secret documents, cipher officers, diplomatic couriers, computer operators, communications clerks, draughtsmen and other technical personnel.

Executive Agents

These are agents recruited to carry out assassinations, diversions or sabotage. The recruitment of executive agents is not usually carried out by the central GRU, but by the local organs of the GRU—the military district departments. Sometimes even strategic intelligence needs similar specialists, but in smaller number.

Executive agents are recruited from criminal elements and from that band of naturally brutish characters who, with passing time, become accustomed to executing any orders they are given. Frequently agents who have been acting as providers of information are transferred by both the strategic and operational branches of the GRU to the category of executive agent, in cases where they may have lost their access.

Agent Recruiters

These are the most devoted and thoroughly tested agents, people who either never had access or who have lost it. As their name suggests, the GRU uses them solely for the recruitment of new agents. The most successful will eventually become group leader or sometimes agent resident.

Agent Legalisers

These are subsidiary agents. They work in the interests of illegals and as a rule are recruited and run only by illegals. Candidate for this category of agents are sought among officials of the police and passport departments, consular clerks, customs and immigration officials, and small employers of labour. Agent legalisers are subjected to especially thorough vetting, because the fate of illegals is entrusted to them. When a Soviet illegal arrives in a country the task of the legalising agent is to ensure the issue of documents by making the necessary entries in the registration books and to ensure that the illegal is in possession of the necessary documentation.

In the history of the GRU quite a few priests carrying falsified documents and registers of baptism and death have given immense service to illegals who, on the basis of false entries, have been able to obtain the necessary documents. A similar role to that of the legalising agent is played by the documentation agents. These are recruited by the undercover residency and their job is to obtain passports, driving licences and samples of official police forms. In contradistinction to the legalising agents, documentation agents do not have any direct contact with illegals. Although they obtain tens and sometimes hundreds, even thousands of passports, they have no direct knowledge of how and when the GRU is going to use them. Frequently the GRU uses the passports obtained through the good offices of documentation agents only as a sample for the preparation of similar falsified copies. Documentation agents may be recruited from among criminal classes who are occupied with the forging and selling of documents on the black market and also from clerks concerned with the production, inventory, storage and issue of passports. Frequently documentation agents have successfully worked among poor students, persuading them, for a financial consideration, to lose their passports.

Couriers

These are supplementary agents engaged in transporting agent materials over state frontiers. Obviously it is not necessary to employ special couriers to transport the material into the Soviet Union or its satellites.

The basic flow of agent material which is not subject to particular suspicion goes from countries with hard regimes into countries with more soft regimes. In the opinion

of the GRU, an opinion fortified by the experience of many years, the hardest country is Great Britain, followed by France, the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium and Holland. As soft countries the GRU includes Finland, Ireland and Austria among others.

The GRU also makes very wide use of countries of the Third World for this purpose, and couriers may sometimes make very long journeys before the material finally arrives in the hands of the GRU. Examples are known of material obtained in the United States going first to Latin America, then to Africa and only from Africa being conveyed to the Soviet Union. In recruiting couriers, the GRU pays particular attention to the drivers and guards of long-distance trains, commercial travellers and sailors of merchant fleets. When hi-jacking of aircraft became more frequent and controls at airports became stricter, the GRU virtually gave up recruiting the crews of airliners. If it uses these at all, it is only for transporting small-sized non-metallic objects.

The Owner of a Safe House or Flat

He is a supplementary agent occupying a position of great trust, usually recruited from among house-owners, concierges and hotel owners, in a word, all those who possess not one but several flats or dwelling places. The term 'safe flat' should be understood not only in its generally accepted meaning but also as a well-equipped cellar, attic, garage or store. For safe flats the GRU selects quiet secluded places where they may want to be able to hide a man sometimes for a length of several months; to carry out meetings, briefings and de-briefings; to change clothes and change appearances; and to hide stolen materials and photograph stolen documents. The owner of a safe house or flat is known in the colloquial language of the GRU by the abbreviation 'KK'.

The Safe Address Owner

He is an agent who receives and transmits secret messages for the GRU, usually recruited from among those people who receive copious correspondence from abroad; the work is normally restricted to inhabitants of 'soft' countries. Sources who have obtained information and intelligence in hard countries send letters in SW to these addresses and the owners transmit the correspondence to officers of the undercover residency. One interesting aspect of recruitment is that the GRU prefers middle-aged people who would not be affected by general mobilisation in the country, so that the chain of communication is not interrupted.

The possessors of secret telephones and, more recently, teleprinters are recruited by the same rules applied to the owners of secret addresses. In GRU language these types of agent networks and their possessors are known by the abbreviations 'KA', 'KT', 'KTP'.

The owners of transmitting points are used for transmitting agent materials within the limits of one city or area. Usually they are street sellers in small kiosks, stalls or paper stalls. An agent who has acquired intelligence will stop and hand over the material to the owner. Hours later, sometimes days, GRU officers will visit the stall to collect the material and hand over money for the agents together with new instructions. This avoids direct contact between the GRU and the agent. Increased security might mean the source agent using a dead-letter box which the stall holder will empty, not knowing who has filled it. The GRU will announce the dead-letter box's whereabouts to the transmitting point only after it has been filled. A different one will be used for each operation, and so even if the police discover that the GRU has a special interest in the small shop or stall and subsequently establishes that this stall serves as a transmitting point, it will still be very difficult to discover the source agent. To mount a surveillance operation in the neighbourhood of the dead-letter box is impossible since the transmitting point only acquires its location after it has been

filled; the agent himself has disappeared long before. The transmitting point is known by the abbreviation 'PP'.

In examining different kinds of agents, people from the free world who have sold themselves to the GRU, one cannot avoid touching on yet another category, perhaps the least appealing of all. Officially one is not allowed to call them agents, and they are not agents in the full sense of being recruited agents. We are talking about the numerous members of overseas societies of friendship with the Soviet Union. Officially, all Soviet representatives regard these parasites with touching feelings of friendship, but privately they call them 'shit-eaters' ('govnoed'). It is difficult to say where this expression originated, but it is truly the only name they deserve. The use of this word has become so firmly entrenched in Soviet embassies that it is impossible to imagine any other name for these people. A conversation might run as follows: Today we've got a friendship evening with shit-eaters', or Today we're having some shit-eaters to dinner. Prepare a suitable menu'.

Officers of both the GRU and the KGB have very much more respect for their agents than for the shit-eaters. The motives of agents are clear — an easy life and plenty of money. If you take risks and lose, then no money and no easy life. To the end of his life the agent will not be able to tear himself away from this servitude — as is the case in the criminal world. But the behaviour of the numerous friends of the Soviet Union is utterly incomprehensible to Soviet people. In the Soviet Union everybody without exception wishes to be abroad, to go absolutely anywhere, even if only with one eye to look at Mongolia or Cambodia. Oh! to be abroad, is the cry, led by the children of Brezhnev, Gromyko and Andropov. When Soviet people want to say that a thing is outstandingly good, they say, 'Really, this must be foreign.' It does not matter which country it comes from, or what its quality or age — it has to be foreign. But suddenly one finds these friends of the Soviet Union, who enjoy all the fruits of civilisation down to Gillette razor blades, who can buy anything they want in the shops, even bananas, and yet they praise the Soviet Union. No, these people are nothing but shit-eaters according to Soviet intelligence. The contempt felt for them does not prevent the GRU and KGB from using them whenever they can. They do everything free, and they will even come to meetings in secure places like the Soviet Embassy.

The recruitment of such people is not recommended by the Central Committee, but why bother to recruit them when they bring such advantages without being recruited? The GRU usually makes use of the shit-eaters 'in the dark', in other words not saying what they are used for or how much they benefit from their services. They usually ask from them information about their neighbours, friends, acquaintances, fellow workers and so on. Sometimes one of them is asked to organise an evening party with one or another of his acquaintances, after which the GRU thanks him and tells him to forget what has happened. They are very good people, they forget everything.

Chapter Four

Agent Recruiting

Agent recruiting is the most important task of both strategic and operational intelligence. No real problems can be solved without agent penetration in basic government, military and technological centres of the enemy.

In the previous chapter we examined the types of secret agents and also the various differences between them. It would not be an exaggeration to say that any citizen of the West, having been recruited by the GRU, may be used very effectively for intelligence purposes, some for the acquisition of secret documents, some for assassinating people, and some for the transporting of agent materials. No citizen of any age and either sex would be idle for long once he or she fell into the hands of the GRU. Nevertheless, basic importance is attached to the provider of information. Long experience has persuaded the GRU that it is essential above all to recruit sources, and only after the GRU has acquired through these sources all possible material may the source himself be used for other purposes, as a recruiter, head agent or supplementary agent. The GRU is convinced that a former source who is now working, for example, as the owner of a transmitting point will never on his own initiative go to the police; but the same cannot be said of agents who have never provided secrets for the GRU, who have not had firm contacts with them. The search for suitable candidates is implemented at the same time in certain different ways: the scrupulous collection of information on persons of interest to the GRU including government institutions for staffs, military bases, design bureaux and people connected with these targets; the study of all foreigners without exception who have any contacts at all with officers of the GRU; and the gradual widening of circles of acquaintances among foreigners. If an operational officer has a hundred acquaintances, one of these must surely be a potential provider of information which will be of interest.

A candidate for recruitment must fulfil the following conditions: he must have agent potential, that is he must be in the position to provide information of real use to the GRU, either to steal or copy secrets, to communicate secret information by word of mouth, or to recruit new agents. There must exist motives by means of which he may be recruited — displeasure with the regime or other political motives, personal financial problems, or private motives like a desire for revenge on somebody or secret crimes which he is trying to hide. It is desirable that he be sympathetic to communism without being a communist. Communist parties everywhere have been compromised to a certain extent by their contacts with the KGB and the GRU, and it is always recommended that agents recruited from communist parties should leave the party.

After the selection of a candidate for recruitment, the second stage — tracing and vetting — commences. Details are collected about the candidate, details which may be obtained through reference books, telephone directories and the press; the task of obtaining all available information about the candidate may well be given to other agents. The GRU may equally want a surveillance on him to collect extra data about his daily life. This process sometimes gives very gratifying results. Up to now the person himself does not suspect that the GRU exists and he has had no contact with its representatives, but it already has a considerable wealth of detail on him. Subsequently the GRU enters the process of cultivation, which consists in a further definition of motives which will be used in the actual recruitment of the person. It also tries to exacerbate his weaknesses: for example, if the man experiences financial problems, the GRU will endeavour to make them worse. If he is displeased with the political regime, the GRU will endeavour to turn his displeasure into hatred. The cultivation process may be carried out after the establishment of an acquaintanceship with the candidate. The whole process, from the beginning of the search for a candidate to the completion of a cultivation period, normally extends for not less than a year; only after this does actual recruitment take place.

There are two principal methods of recruitment, the gradual approach and the crash approach. The crash approach is the highest class of agent work. The GRU may authorise the resident to mount such an operation only if the resident has been able to provide good arguments for the taking of such a risk. Quite a few examples are

known of recruitment at the first meeting, of course following the secret cultivation which has gone on for many months. It was in this way that many American creators of the first atomic bomb were recruited. Their subsequent argument was that it was as a mark of protest against the bombing of the Japanese cities that they, on their own initiative, established contact with Soviet intelligence. However, for some reason they forgot to add that this contact had been established long before the first experiments with the bomb, when there was no cause for protest. They also evaded the question as to how several people, simultaneously and independently from one another, established contact with the undercover residency of the GRU in Canada, but not with the undercover residency of the KGB in Mexico, for example.

The crash approach, or 'love at first sight' in GRU jargon, has a number of irrefutable advantages. Contact with the future agent takes place only once, instead of at meetings over many months, as is the case with the gradual approach. After the first contact the newly recruited agent will himself take action on his own security. He will never talk to his wife, or tell her that he has a charming friend in the Soviet military attache who is also very interested in stamp collecting.

In the gradual approach method, this sort of thing happens very, very often. The candidate has as yet not felt the deadly grip of the GRU, has not yet understood what it wants from him. He still nourishes his illusions, and naturally he will not hide his good friendship with such charming people. However, the gradual approach method, despite its shortcomings, is frequently used. The fact is that the GRU is not always, indeed not even in the majority of cases, able to collect a sufficient amount of material about the candidate without his knowledge to prepare him sufficiently for recruitment. In many cases it is necessary to establish contact and to use each meeting with the candidate to study his motives and to carry out vetting and cultivation.

Having established contact, the operational officer tries by every possible method to avoid 'blowing' the candidate; that is, he tries to hide the connection from the police, from friends and acquaintances of the man himself, and also from his own fellow countrymen. The only people who should know anything about an agent and therefore about candidates for recruitment are the resident, the deputy resident and of course the cipher officer and the Centre — nobody else. In order that he should not blow the candidate from the very first meeting, the operational officer will try to carry out meetings in secluded restaurants, cafes, bars far from the place where the candidate lives and far from his place of work. At all costs he will try to avoid the candidate telephoning him either at home or in the embassy. He will try to avoid the candidate visiting Soviet official institutions and places where Soviet people gather together. He will decline invitations to meet the candidate's family or visit his home. (The particular pretexts I used were that my office was far too busy, or I was never there, so the candidate would not ring; at home, I would tell him, there was a small baby who slept badly. Of course, in order to appear serious, I had to give him the telephone numbers with my business card.) After the acquaintanceship has ripened, the GRU officer will try to make every subsequent meeting as interesting and useful as possible for the candidate. If they exchange postage stamps, then the Soviet, by apparent mistake or out of friendship, will give the future agent a very valuable stamp. The officer may then ask for a very innocent and insignificant favour from the man and pay him very generously for it. During this stage the most important thing is that the future agent becomes accustomed to being asked favours and fulfilling them accurately. It does not matter what sort of favours or services. Maybe he will be asked to accept at his address and forward to the officers letters ostensibly from his mistress, or to buy a complete set of telephone directories and give them to the officer as if he did not know how or where this could be done. By degrees the tasks become more

complicated, but the payment for them grows equally. Perhaps he will be asked to acquire in his name some works of reference which are not on sale and are distributed only on signature, or he will be asked to talk about and describe his friends who work with him. In many cases the actual recruitment proposal is never made, as the candidate gradually becomes an agent of the GRU without having fully realised it. He may consider that he is simply doing his business and doing favours for a good friend. Then, much to his surprise, the man will one day find that all ways of extricating himself have been cut off, and that he is deeply ensnared in espionage work. After he has become aware of this for himself, the GRU informs him what the affair is all about and there begins a new stage. The tasks become more serious but the payment for them gradually decreases. This is done on the pretext of his own security. What can he do? Go on strike?

There exists yet another method of recruitment, perhaps the most effective and secure. This method was worked out by the GRU in the first decade after the war and seems not to be used by the KGB. It can only be used at exhibitions and only against the owners of small firms which produce military material. In spite of the fact that the method has so many limitations, including the impossibility of recruiting generals and their secretaries, and equally its complete unacceptability for illegals it does, however, give positive results. It is very similar to the direct approach, but is distinct from the classical 'love at first sight' in that a lengthy search for a candidate, his tracing, vetting and cultivation are absent.

Before the opening of exhibitions of military electronics, armaments and military technology, ship-building and engine-building conferences, air shows and so on, hundreds of which take place every year, a scientific delegation appears at the GRU residency with a list of everything which is essential for the Soviet military and the armaments industry. The experts of course know that at the exhibition there will be demonstrations of models whose sale to the Soviet Union is categorically prohibited. None the less, the delegation will carry suitcases crammed full of money, with full powers to spend it as they wish. All expenditure is approved and justified. The examination and construction of such samples as they have been able to obtain in the Soviet Union will occupy much more time and money. The delegation visits the exhibition and looks at the stands of the big corporations only to disguise its real object. At each of these stands there are several salesmen and guides, any one or all of which may be from the security services. The delegation is only really interested in the stands of small firms where the explanations are carried out by the owner or a director himself. The delegation gets into conversation with him and an officer of the local GRU residency acts the part of interpreter. The experts pass themselves off as an official Soviet delegation. At the same time they manage to let the operational officer know that they have arrived at just such a firm as could be of use to them and that the exhibit is not just a model, but an actual piece. 'Is it really forbidden to buy such a piece? Oh! What a pity. Nothing to be done, but tell us, how much does it cost? 20,000? How cheap! We would pay twenty times that much for such a piece! Great pity that it is not for sale.' All this in a light-hearted way, as if incidental. The conversation turns to another subject. After a few minutes the delegation takes its leave in a friendly way. The interpreter stays behind for a few seconds. 'It was so nice meeting you. Could we not continue our talk over dinner this evening? No? You're busy? What a pity. Many thanks. It was very nice to make your acquaintance.' And that is all, nothing criminal, just a short, friendly conversation. The Soviet delegation did not propose anything to anybody. It did not ask, it did not demand. It was merely interested. In the meantime the delegation goes on with its inspection. The exhibition is huge, hundreds of firms, and the list of essential things is too long. Another stand, another firm, the same result, it does not matter. Not everything has been lost. There

are still more stands. 'How much does this piece cost? 25,000? Only 25,000, we would give half a million for that. Great pity that it's not for sale.' The delegation goes on. The interpreter stays for a few seconds. 'Could I not invite you to dinner this evening in the restaurant?' 'I don't know whether that would be all right. We hardly know each other.' And that is all. Recruitment is accomplished. The delegation continues its inspection. New interpreters are provided. Drinking martinis in the bar, they wait their turn. The exhibition is huge. Hundreds of firms and the list of equipment wanted by their government is very long.

The GRU's calculation has shown itself to be unfailing. The owner of a small firm, even a very successful one, is always at great risk, always keen to strengthen his situation. When he receives a proposal to sell his own wares at a price fifteen to twenty times the highest normal price, he thinks to himself: this is a matter of industrial espionage, which in several countries is not even considered a criminal offence. From the first moment he knows what is wanted from him and carefully evaluates the step that he decides on. In any case, if he sells his product he can hide the fact from the authorities. It is equally easy for him to hide the money he has received. The only thing he has not taken into consideration is the wolf-like greed of the GRU. He hopes to dispose of the products of his firm, supposing that this will be sufficient. He is deeply mistaken. Having bought the first model or set of documents, certainly at a staggering price, the GRU will later on lower the prices and finally dictate them. One might object that the really big secrets are all in the hands of the big firms, but this is not absolutely true. Very often Soviet designers are not interested in the whole rocket or the whole aircraft, but only in some small part — an engine, a steering system or some particular instrument (in many cases not even an important part but only a membrane, a heat sink or some such thing) — exactly the sort of thing that would be produced by a components manufacturer. And of course recruitment in small firms does not in any way hinder the GRU's attempts to penetrate large firms. Far from it. After he has been milked, the owner of a components manufacturing firm, now turned agent, must turn his attention to the recruitment of other agents in the big firms to which he supplies his parts. Then suddenly in the Soviet Union an aircraft exactly like Concorde appears. (To blame the GRU for the trials and difficulties of the TU144 Concorde is not justified. Weak Soviet industry, using antediluvian technology, was simply not able to copy the aeroplane properly, despite having all the necessary drawings and documents.) Recently, the number of exhibition recruitments by the GRU has steadily increased. They have been facilitated by the fact that in these recruitments the GRU does not spend one rouble of its own money. The money which the delegation brings with it to the exhibition comes out of the budget of the armaments industry which is ready to spend as much money as it has to in profitable business. For its money the armaments industry receives essential documents and samples, and the GRU, without paying a penny, receives an agent who will serve it for long years afterwards. Exhibition recruitments are also attractive because they can be carried out with complete impunity. Only one case of detection is known, an air show at Le Bourget when the assistant Soviet military attache was detained for endeavouring to carry out just such a recruitment. He was detained, but not for long because a military diplomat cannot be held. Declared persona non grata, after three years he went to another country in another official capacity as a deputy resident. The only thing which is not clear in all these stories is the attitude of those countries who joyfully accept these supposed 'diplomats'.

As for GRU illegals, they basically use the first two methods. The work of illegals of course is made easier by the obvious simplification of the search for candidates and their tracing and vetting. Since they very often play the part of bona fide business people they come into frequent contact with the owners of firms producing military

material, and by means of proposing advantageous deals, they gradually attract these people to play the part of agents. There is another very important factor. Illegals hardly ever recruit in the name of Soviet intelligence. They always assume another guise. In Japan, for example, they may pass themselves off as American industrial spies, in Northern Ireland as an organisation going in for terrorist activities against the English military presence, in Arab countries as anti-Zionists. In countries with dictatorial regimes GRU illegals recruit people in the name of anti-government organisations carrying on the underground struggle against tyranny. A method often used by illegals is to pass themselves off as supporters of separatist movements. It is only necessary for the illegal to know some of the important political views in order to be able to adopt them for himself and begin recruiting. Sometimes such recruitments are implemented very quickly and without problems. 'We are representatives of such and such a liberation army, this or that red brigade. Can't you help us? If you can't we ask you not to let anybody know about our visit.' The candidate is then recruited in the name of an organisation for which he feels sympathy and he gratifies his conscience all his life with the thought that he is a revolutionary and defends ideals near to his heart, not even suspecting the existence of the GRU and its illegals. He is so full of pride that he has been selected for such secret work that he may not even tell those who think likewise about it.

There is one last method of recruiting. This is when a foreigner comes in and says, 'Please recruit me.' However strange it may seem, every year hundreds of such people come into Soviet embassies and the same answer awaits them all. This is a diplomatic representation and not an espionage centre. Be so kind as to leave the building or we will call the police.' The police are usually not called but the embassy staff chase the would-be agent out quickly. Even if the GRU (and the KGB, for that matter) is sure that the caller is not a young reporter anxious to publish a sensational article or somebody purporting to sell secret documents but really only selling some nonsense, how can they be sure that the caller is not a police agent who wants to know who in the embassy is concerned with secrets? Thus the answer to all is the same. 'You have got the wrong address. We are not concerned with such things.' This does not mean that it would not be interesting to have a look at what the caller has brought, but long experience has shown that the person who really wants to be recruited and really has something to sell does not say very much but simply hands over the material, together with instructions as to where he can be found, and leaves. He might add a note to the effect that 'this is not all the material I have but only a part, if you are interested.'

Elementary psychological analysis shows that this is perhaps the only way to convince the GRU that they can trust the person. Indeed if a person has decided to entrust his life and the happiness of his family to such dark and unknown personalities, why on earth should he not hand them some papers? By such a gesture he not only draws attention to himself but he gives time for reflection on his proposals and for the necessary checking with higher authorities and checking of the material. However, if the visitor brings papers and documents to the embassy and begins to demand immediate financial reward, this leads one to think, 'If, after careful consideration, he has decided on this step, if he is really ready to entrust his life to us, why does he think that we would deceive him and not return the papers if they were of no use to us? And where is the guarantee that the papers which he has brought are not forgeries? Who would carry the can if we paid him money for papers which afterwards turned out to be forgeries? No, we are not interested in such things.'

That these 'walk-ins' are an extremely unpredictable form of recruitment is perhaps best illustrated by two examples, both of which occurred at the same residency in West Germany. An American sergeant came to one of the Soviet observation missions

in West Germany (each of which is a GRU residency), bringing with him the block of a cipher machine used in one of the American bases. The sergeant announced that for a certain sum he could bring a second part of the machine and added that there could only be a deal on condition that the GRU would not subsequently attempt to recruit him. The residency immediately accepted both proposals. The sergeant got his money and an assurance that the GRU would forget all about him immediately after the deal was done.

The cipher machine which was obtained, or more accurately two of its basic blocks, enabled the technical services of the GRU to decipher thousands of American radio communications which had been intercepted earlier but remained undeciphered. They also enabled them to study the principles of cipher work in the American Army and in the armies of its allies and, by exploiting the American principles, to create more complete Soviet examples. What about the sergeant? Of course he was immediately recruited....

On another occasion a couple of years later an American major approached the same Soviet residency proposing to sell an American atomic artillery shell. In proof of his good intentions he handed over free of charge to the residency detailed plans of the atomic depots and instructions on checking procedures and standing orders for work with atomic equipment. These documents by themselves were of great value, although the major's main proposal was of vastly greater interest. The major announced that he would demand a substantial sum for the shell, and imposed the condition that the Soviet side, having studied the shell, must return it after two months. Some days later, the specialists of the GRU information service confirmed the genuineness and very great importance of the documents which had been acquired. The GRU leadership decided to buy the atomic shell and to pay the price demanded for it by the American. A number of the senior officers of the residency were called to Moscow and given a crash course in American atomic technology. A week later, on a dark rainy night in a clearing in the middle of a forest, two motor cars met. In one was the American major, in the other three operational officers. There were two more Soviet cars hidden nearby, ready to intervene if necessary. Many people did without sleep that night. The Soviet Consul dozed by his telephone, in full readiness to come tearing out to the wood and in the name of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to defend the military diplomats. On the orders of the Central Committee, many highly placed officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Tass were also on alert. Of course they did not know what was going on or where, but they were ready to announce to the world that the imperialists had mounted yet another provocation against the Soviet Union. In fact, the Tass and Ministry of Foreign Affairs announcements were already prepared. But everything went according to plan. The American and the three Soviets transferred the shell from one car to the other, and a thorough check was carried out. The operational officers knew beforehand the serial number, the level of radiation, the exact weight and the markings which would identify it as a genuine shell. All was as it should be. The Soviets handed over a briefcase full of banknotes to the American and agreed to meet in two months' time for the return of the shell. Once the shell was in the Soviet car with diplomatic number plates, it was tantamount to being on Soviet territory. The police could stop the car, but they did not have the right to search it nor remove anything from it. Diplomatic immunity is not to be trifled with. In the event nobody stopped the officers, and the car drove peacefully into the courtyard of the Soviet diplomatic mission. Later the shell was transported in a diplomatic container under armed guard to the Soviet Union.

The GRU chief joyfully informed the Central Committee of the successful outcome of the operation. 'Where is the bomb?' asked a voice on the telephone. 'We have it in GRU headquarters.' 'In Moscow!?' 'Yes.'

A long and largely unprintable tirade ensued, whose import was roughly as follows: 'And what happens if there is a little spring inside this shell and it explodes right in the middle of the Soviet capital and turns Moscow into Hiroshima?'

The GRU had worked out the whole operation with the maximum number of precautionary measures and the plan to acquire the shell had been confirmed by all departments from the chief to the general staff up to the Central Committee. However, nobody had foreseen the possibility that there could be a timed device in the shell and that the Central Committee, the Politburo, the KGB, the GRU, all the Ministers and departments of State, the general staff, all the Military Academies, all the principal design bureaux, in a word, everything which constitutes Soviet power, could be instantaneously destroyed. There was no answer. No defence was possible. One shell and the whole system could have gone up, because everybody and everything is controlled from Moscow. The possibility of such an occurrence had only been realised in the Central Committee when the shell was already in Moscow. Instead of the expected decoration, the GRU chief received a 'service incompetence note' — a strong warning that in the future even the most trivial mistake would lead to dismissal.

The shell was taken for the time being to the central aerodrome and a military transport aircraft speedily transported it to Novaya Zemlya. The shell did not explode. At the same time there was no guarantee that it would not explode while it was being dismantled and destroy the leading Soviet specialists who were working on it, so the dismantling was conducted in a special pavilion hurriedly constructed on the atomic testing ground. Preliminary work on the shell had already disquieted the Soviet specialists, as it was much more radioactive than it should have been. After protracted arguments and consultations, the shell was dismantled with the greatest possible care. Only then was it found that it was not a shell at all — but a beautifully executed copy.

The American major from the depot for atomic armaments had known to the last detail how to do this. He had taken a written-off practice shell or, as it is called, a 'standard weight equivalent', had painted it as a real shell and put on a corresponding marking and number. Inside the shell he had put some radioactive waste which he had obtained. Of course he was not able to regulate this to the extent that the level of radiation would conform to the level of radiation of a genuine shell, but this was not necessary. At the time when it was first checked after having been handed over to the operational officers, there had been no attempt to determine the exact level of radioactivity. The officers had only been interested to see whether there was radiation or not. After all that had happened the officers who had taken part in the operation, of course, received no decorations but at the same time they were not punished and neither was the GRU chief. The Special Commission of the General Staff and Central Committee established that the forgery had been very skilfully and thoroughly executed and that there had been little possibility of exposing it at the time of the hand-over. All the same the GRU was not happy about it. It began a search for the American major. The first attempts proved unsuccessful. It was established that he had been posted to the USA immediately after the sale of the forgery, and it would not be so easy to find him there. He had apparently known of the imminence of his posting and chosen his moment perfectly. Steps were taken to find him in the United States, and at the same time the GRU asked for permission to murder him from the Central Committee. However, the Central Committee turned down the request on the basis that the major was incredibly cunning and could well outwit the GRU a second time as he had outwitted them earlier. They were ordered to forget about the major and stop searching for him. Now, whenever a 'walk-in' appears at a Soviet embassy

and suggests the purchase for an exorbitant price of technical documents of exceptional importance, GRU residents always remember the American major.

That it is extremely difficult to find real volunteers is a simple fact. It is much, much harder to discover a volunteer than an agent whom the GRU has spent a year and more in processing. But real volunteers, however warmly they may be welcomed, do not take into consideration another simple thing. The Soviet operational officer, having seen a great deal of the ugly face of communism, very frequently feels the utmost repulsion to those who sell themselves to it willingly. Even amongst those few who still believe in communism, the intelligence officer will make a great distinction between the agent he has recruited by using a whole arsenal of tricks and traps, and the volunteer. And when a GRU or KGB officer decides to break with his criminal organisation, something which fortunately happens quite often, the first thing he will do is try to expose the hated volunteer.

Chapter Five

Agent Communications

GRU theoreticians officially admit that agent communications -that complex of channels for transmitting instructions and material — is the weakest link in the chain. It is the fault of communications, they say, that there are so many failures, and to some degree they are right. Whatever the theoreticians say, however, we in the field know that by far the greatest damage to Soviet intelligence is caused by the defection of GRU officers. Enormous damage was done when Igor Gusev went over to the West. By this one gesture the whole powerful current of technological intelligence on the production of atomic weapons, which was flowing like a river into the hands of Stalin and his blood-thirsty clique, was stopped dead. And historians will remember with gratitude the name of the GRU Colonel Oleg Penkovsky. Thanks to his priceless information the Cuban crisis was not transformed into a last World War. Nevertheless, it is indisputable that after the phenomenon of willing and mass defection to the side of the enemy, which was clearly absent in the old Russian intelligence service of the pre-revolutionary period, agent communications is the most vulnerable sector of Soviet intelligence.

All agent communications are divided into personal and non-personal. Personal contact is the most vulnerable element, and preference is always given to non-personal contact. At the same time, in the first stages, especially during cultivation, recruitment and vetting, personal meetings are an inescapable evil with which one has to come to terms. Later on, as agents gain experience and involvement in their work, personal contacts gradually give way to non-personal ones. Many of the most experienced agents have not had a personal meeting with their case officer for several years. If such meetings are absolutely unavoidable, the GRU prefers that they should take place either on its own or on neutral territory.

Routine meetings are organised between agents, however. For example an illegal will meet his agent or officers of the undercover residency their agents. The details for these meetings are worked out previously. Whoever is the senior man will give instructions to the junior as to where, when, and in what circumstances they will meet. Experienced agents are often given a programme of meetings for six months ahead, sometimes a year, and in some cases even five years or more. Routine meetings usually take place in cafes, restaurants, cinemas, night clubs or parks. Both parties try to give the impression that it is a normal meeting between ordinary people discussing important topics. Frequently they will try to give the impression that they

are collectors of such items as postage stamps, postcards or coins and will have these objects spread out in front of them in the restaurant or cafe where they are meeting. Sometimes these meetings take place in cinemas or public conveniences. Longer meetings, especially during the vetting stage of agents, will take place in hotels and camping places, caravans, yachts or boats which either are the property of the agent or are hired by him. In all cases, and this also applies to other operations involving agents, GRU officers will try to avoid city quarters which are known to be the haunt of criminals or prostitutes, and railway and police stations, airports, guarded state military or commercial undertakings — in other words all those places where police activity may be expected to be at its highest. The alternative meeting is a carbon copy of the main meeting for which arrangements are made at the same time as the main meeting: 'If one of us should be unable to get to the meeting we will meet in the same place in a week's time'. A complicated system of alternative meetings is set out for experienced agents, and there may be up to three or four alternative meetings for each main meeting. With so many alternatives it is essential that places and times are changed.

This system of alternative meetings is introduced by GRU officers long before recruitment. A man who has as yet done nothing for the GRU, who does not even suspect its existence, is already being indoctrinated into secrecy and is already being introduced to the system of agent communications. Usually the subject is introduced in various quite innocent ways; for example, the officer says, 'I shall be very pleased to meet you again but I simply don't know whether I shall be able to be on time. The life of a diplomat contains so many unexpected happenings. If I am late, then don't wait for me more than ten minutes. In any case we will meet again in three days' time.' If you have a good friend in the Soviet embassy and he says that sort of thing to you, and at the same time has a hundred reasons why he cannot use the telephone in such a simple case, be sure that the GRU has a thick file on you and that sooner or later you will receive a proposal of recruitment and notice with astonishment that all ways out seem to be blocked.

At the other end of the spectrum there is the emergency meeting. This access is accorded only to the most experienced agents, and those who may communicate information of such outstanding importance that it brooks no delay at all. The agent is told how he should go about calling the officer on stipulated telephones or telegrams or signals. In the same way the agent is also given the possibility of communicating danger. For example, if he rings up on the telephone and says, 'I need John,' then the officer will come immediately. If the agent says, 'Ring John,' then they will reply that he has made a mistake. If the agent uses the second variant, then he is showing the GRU that he has been arrested by the police who are trying to get to the case officer through the agent.

Brush contacts are for handing over material, instructions, money and so on. The officer and the agent carry out only one contact, in very populous places, in the underground, on full buses, at peak hours and when the crowds come out of stadiums, for example. Brush contact must be carried out with great precision otherwise the crowd may separate those taking part. On the other hand the transmission of the material must not attract attention especially if one of the participants is under strict surveillance. The check meeting is carried out in the same conditions as the routine meeting. However, the most junior of those taking part must not suspect that it is not a routine meeting and that he is in fact being checked. A number of GRU officers take up position before the meeting, in places where they can easily observe what is going on (for example, on observation platforms for tourists where there are powerful binoculars and telescopes installed). The entry of the agent to the meeting place is checked from a great distance. They check his punctuality, his

behaviour, they watch for anybody who follows him, they observe the presence of any suspicious movement in the area of the meeting place prior to the meeting. After the agent has realised that nobody is going to come and meet him, the GRU officers may observe what he does, where he goes after the aborted meeting and what action he takes.

The secret rendezvous (Yavka) is often confused with the secret house or Yavotchnaya Kvartira. At the present time the term 'secret house' is not used in the GRU. It has been replaced by the term 'secret flat' or KK but the word Yavka is used to mean a meeting between two men who are unknown to each other, for example two illegals, or an agent with his new case officer. The secret rendezvous as an element of agent communications is given to all agents without exception — they are given the place, time, recognition signals, password and answer — because the secret rendezvous is essential for re-establishing lost contacts. For example, if in extreme circumstances the whole of the Soviet embassy was declared persona non grata and had to leave the country, the agent who had lost contact with his case officer would be obliged to go to a certain place on the 31st of every month which has thirty-one days, that is seven times a year, having previously agreed recognition signals (brief case in left hand, book in right hand, and so on). In the appointed place another person will come towards him and will give the previously arranged password to which the agent gives the proper reply. In giving the correct reply the agent shows to his new leader that he has not made a mistake and secondly that the agent acknowledges the authority of his new case officer. If nobody comes to the pre-arranged place, the agent is obliged to repeat the process until such time as somebody does appear to re-establish contact.

As the agent becomes more and more involved in his work, elements of non-personal contact gradually take the place of personal contact. The most experienced agents have only one element of personal contact — the secret rendezvous or Yavka — and several elements of non-personal contact. Let us examine these. First there is the long-range two-way radio link, generally imagined as a special portable radio set which may transmit information directly to the receiving centre on Soviet territory or to a Soviet ship or satellite. This classical element in all spy films is in practice only used in wartime. Instead agents and illegals are issued with small written instructions containing several types of ordinary current components which may be bought in any radio shop, and the means whereby they may be put together to make a long-range two-way set. This solves two problems at the same time. If an agent is arrested there is only to be found in his flat a pair of good Japanese receivers, a tape recorder and other components which can be bought in any shop. There is therefore no way that he can be suspected of any criminal activity. And secondly the problem of the transportation and secret storage of a radio set of comparatively large proportions is avoided. The GRU is continually looking at the market as regards radio sets and components, and working out new recommendations as to how they should be assembled. In times of war, however, quick-acting and ultra-quick-acting sets are used, exploiting technical means of radio transmission in seconds or micro-seconds. Satellites are used in conjunction with these sets and this makes it possible to transmit information on a narrow radio beam vertically overhead. The long-range one-way radio link does not replace, but augments the two-way link. The most convenient, reliable and secure type of link is inevitably the one by which the agent receives from the Centre. One-way radio links are usually broadcast by Soviet radio stations or special ships or polar stations to be received anywhere in the world by ordinary radio receivers. Instructions to the agent are transmitted in the form of previously agreed phrases or numbers in ordinary radio programmes, or as a simple numerical code. Even if a police force should by some means or another guess that the transmission

they are hearing is not a coded transmission for cosmonauts or warships, they cannot possibly determine for which spy it is destined, or even which country. The agent who hears such a transmission is also not exposed to any great risk. However, for the GRU it is often necessary that the agent himself transmits. For this the short-range radio link exists. The agent transmits information to the Soviet embassy with the help of small transmitters, like the sort of walkie-talkie sets which can be bought in any shop and which are used for guiding model aeroplanes and ships (one cannot help noticing how many aerials there are on the roof of the Soviet embassy). In this type of radio exchange the GRU takes the cover of a fireman, ambulance driver, construction worker or a policeman. All radio conversations within the city limits are thoroughly studied by GRU specialists and any of them may be used by the GRU for its dark ends. A short-range special link is an alternative to short-range radio links. In connection with increasing the monitoring of radio exchanges, the GRU frequently undertakes the transmission of signals under water. One fisherman will transmit signals by means of a rod put in the water and another several kilometres distant from him will receive the signal by using the same method. Or water and gas pipes can be used. Significant research is also going on in the field of electro-optical communications.

Dead-letter boxes are the favourite GRU means of contact. They have the most universal application and in addition to communications they may be used for the storage of everything that has to do with a spy's work — documents, money, radio sets, special photographic equipment, for example. Thousands of types of dead-letter boxes are known, from cracks in gravestones and brickwork to specially devised magnetic 'letter boxes' in the form of metal nuts. Applied to the structure of a bridge among thousands of similar nuts and rivets this device is easily hidden and just as easy to undo. The GRU also makes wide use of boxes constructed in the form of a plastic hollow wedge with a lid. These can very easily be pushed into the ground in any public park. Underwater dead-letter boxes are also widely used.

Their selection is always a complicated and responsible business. The primary criterion is that as far as possible they must not be prone to accidental discovery. They are threatened by many possible happenings: they may be found by children, by the police, even by archaeologists. There may be floods, or the heat of summer may affect them. Someone may start building on the site. All this must be taken into account. Equally important is that the dead-letter box's location must be easy to describe to another person, even by somebody who only knows about it at secondhand. It must also be located in a place where it is possible for the case officer to go at any time with a plausible cover story for his presence there. Some random examples from GRU practice are worth describing.

As a general principle of security, each dead-letter box (DLB) may only be used once. Documents on all DLBs are stored in the GRU command point and after the completion of a DLB operation the document is stamped 'used' and transferred to the archives. An officer at a command point, working in a GRU top secret archive, once discovered the description of a DLB on which there was no 'used' stamp. The document was very old, pre-war. The DLB has been selected in 1932 and three years later some material had been put in it — money and valuables for the use of the illegal residency in case of emergency, apparently 'in various currencies to a total sum of 50,000 American dollars'. The officer carefully inspected the document again, but there was nothing on it to show that the DLB had been emptied. The officer informed his chief of what he had found and he in his turn informed the GRU chief, who decided on an investigation. The affair was not complicated and a week later the investigation disclosed that the dead-letter box had belonged to the Hamburg illegal residency which in 1937 had been recalled to Moscow lock, stock and barrel for 'instructions', and shot. All the materials of the residency had been handed in to the archives,

together with the document about the unused DLB. The new officers who took the place of those who had been shot were completely inexperienced and started work with new sets of documents. There was no time, in any case, to look into the old documents. Then the new GRU staff was also liquidated. So there were many documents which were completely forgotten and simply collected dust in the archives.

The GRU chief took two decisions, firstly, to nominate a group of specially trusted officers for permanent archive work- perhaps something else of interest might be discovered — and secondly, to give an order to one of the GRU residencies in West Germany to find this old unused DLB. Suppose it was still there. If it was, then the value of its contents would have increased many times.

In fact the DLB had survived, in spite of the war, the fierce bombing of Hamburg, the rebuilding of the city after the war, and the enormous expansion in the development of the city. The DLB consisted of a hermetically sealed container, about the size of a small suitcase, which had been buried at the bottom of a lake in a quiet park. For greater security it had been covered with an old tombstone which had been sprinkled all over with sand and silt. The container was removed to Moscow and opened there. Much to the disappointment of all those present, all that was inside was a few dozen old-fashioned silver watches of very little value, a hundred or so American dollars and a few thousand crisp German Marks of the time of the Third Reich.

The second dead-letter box was in the very centre of the American capital. At the beginning of his lunch break, the agent would go into a park and hide top secret documents in the hollow of a tree. Some minutes later a Soviet 'diplomat' would appear, remove the documents and with the help of two other 'diplomats' copy them in his car which was parked at the Capitol. The operation was an especially daring one, and succeeded several times—after the GRU chief had sanctioned repeated use of the DLB. The copying of the documents in the car did not take more than twenty minutes, and the agent, on his return from his lunch break, was able to walk in the park for a few minutes longer and retrieve his documents. One day the case officer was making his way towards the dead-letter box. Suddenly his attention was attracted by a sheet of white paper blowing about with the first yellow and red leaves. The officer picked it up and, horrified, saw the stamp 'top secret'. He looked around. All over the park were dozens of similar sheets of paper. The officer realised that squirrels getting ready for winter had taken up residence in the hollowed-out tree; the pieces of paper had got in their way and they had thrown them out. He immediately set about picking up the pieces, many of which were torn by the sharp teeth and claws of these lovable little animals. At that dramatic moment a policeman appeared in the park. He evidently took the Soviet diplomat for one of the White House workers who had had his papers blown out of his hands by the wind. Without a word, the policeman also started to collect the papers. Having gathered a considerable number, the policeman held them out to the embarrassed case officer. The latter took them and smiled in the most foolish way, even forgetting to thank his saviour and helper, who saluted and withdrew. Nevertheless the situation remained highly critical. There was absolutely no time, as the agent had already appeared on the opposite side of the park. The case officer hurried to meet him, although this was strictly forbidden. Quickly outlining the situation, the officer suggested two possible ways out: either the agent should tell his department that he had in error torn up the papers and thrown them into the waste-paper basket but then had remembered in time; or he should wait for four days. The agent chose the second option. Within hours, an officer with diplomatic rank had made two changes of aircraft in Europe and arrived in Warsaw where a fast fighter interceptor was waiting for him. Again only hours later, the GRU had carried out a complete forgery of the documents, and a day later they were returned to the agent.

Of course, all this time he had been threatened with exposure, but the GRU's swift action had saved him.

A third dead-letter box was in a small drainage pipe on the embankment of a river in northern Europe. The officer had to lower into the pipe a small metal box with a magnet attached. The magnet was very strong and normally there would have been no risk that the box would come unstuck. Pretending to tie up his shoe-lace, the officer carefully lowered the little box into the drainage pipe with the magnet and took out his hand. But the first frosts had started and the officer had not taken into account the fact that the interior of the pipe was covered with a thin layer of ice. The box slid down the pipe, giving out a harmonious ringing noise, and after a few seconds flew out into the river, which was unfortunately also covered with a thin sheet of ice. Had the river not been iced over, the box would have sunk and that would have been that. But instead it skidded on the ice right to the middle of the river. The ice was too thin to walk on, and nor was it, possible to throw things at the box across the ice to send it to the other side. In the box was a film with instructions for an agent. There was only one way out. The officer ran into a shop and bought a fishing rod; then, for an hour and a half, to the astonishment of passers-by, he cast his hook onto the ice until it was taken by the magnet. By carefully winding in his line, he succeeded in retrieving the valuable box. This happened in the heart of one of the Western capitals in broad daylight.

Signals, too, are a means of exchanging information which is highly favoured by the GRU. Office pins are used as signals stuck in a predetermined place, dots, bands, crosses, signals are made with chalk, pencil, paints, lipstick. A car parked in a pre-arranged place at a pre-arranged time may serve as a signal or a doll placed in a window of a house. These are used as warnings of danger, requests for meetings, confirmation of the reception of radio instructions and for hundreds of other intentions.

Usually an agent who has worked for some years with the GRU will have as a minimum the following elements of communication: the secret rendezvous, long-range one-way radio link, short-range radio line or special link and a system of dead-letter boxes and signals. An agent group in addition is obliged in every case to have a long-range two-way radio link.

Chapter Six

The Practice of Agent Work

So our agent has been recruited, trained during long routine meetings (perhaps in a small hotel off the beaten track), and there has been worked out for him a complicated system of agent communications including both personal and non-personal forms of communication and also the actions to be taken in case of a sudden break of all channels of communication. Elements of non-personal communication have been gradually introduced and have gradually superseded the personal meetings. In these meetings the agent has handed over photocopies of secret documents and has received in exchange small sums of money. Attempts by the agent to protest or refuse to work have been successfully suppressed. The material received from him has been thoroughly compared and checked with analogous material received from other sources. So far, all is going well. What happens next is a new stage, the thinking behind which includes the segregation of the agent from the Soviet embassy and from all meetings with official Soviet representatives.

Up till the Second World War not only the agents of undercover residencies, but also illegals and agents subordinate to illegals, were tied to the embassies. With the outbreak of war, when the embassies were closed, all contact with the powerful agent network was lost. The flow of agent information was cut off at the very moment when it would have been of the greatest value. The deputy head of the GRU was sent into occupied Europe with several radio officers and unlimited powers. Within a short time he had successfully organised a small illegal resident network on the territories of Belgium and Holland. Subsequently, by means of secret rendezvous, he was able to re-establish contact with all the illegal residencies. However, the agent radio station by the name of 'Sever', which had been established before the war, proved useless. Nobody had supposed that the advance of the Nazis would be so precipitate, and the radio station had not been designed to deal with such long distances. The ships of the Soviet Baltic fleet were blockaded in their own bases and could not be used for the reception of agent transmissions. Then the GRU organised a receiving centre on the territory of the Soviet embassy in Sweden. Information from all the illegal residencies came to the illegal residency network and from there was transmitted directly to the Soviet Union. This was perhaps the only possible solution at the time and of course it had many disadvantages. First of all, the agents, their case officers and the illegals found themselves in one gigantic residency, a state of affairs which compromised many hundreds of men. It could not be long before it collapsed, and the collapse began in the most vulnerable place, deep in the nerve centre of this most unprecedentedly powerful underground organisation. One of the illegal radio operators, wishing to obtain the favours of a girl, boasted to her that he knew all the latest news in the world, as he regularly listened to the radio (which was, of course, forbidden on occupied territory). The girl, in her turn eager for the favours of a certain German corporal, informed him of this fact. So the most powerful underground intelligence organisation in history was discovered — this organisation which had penetrated many of Germany's most sensitive secrets. Referred to by the Germans as 'the Red Orchestra', the organisation was completely neutralised and all the agents and illegals of this gigantic octopus arrested.

The GRU learnt its lessons very quickly. Already, only a few months after what had happened, illegal residencies were functioning on the territories of its true 'allies', the United States, Great Britain and Canada which were completely separate from the embassies. This now cast-iron rule is observed by the GRU everywhere. Undercover residencies support illegals, but only on instructions from the Centre without having any idea for whom they are working. All operations in support of illegals are worked out in such a way that the officers of the GRU undercover residency do not have one crumb of information which is not necessary. Operations are planned in such a way that there is no possibility of the illegals becoming dependent on the actions of the undercover residency. Another lesson learnt from the arrest of the 'Red Orchestra' is the division of residencies into even smaller independent parts, especially insofar as this concerns illegals. And, thirdly and significantly, there is the separation of agents from the embassy which is our present concern.

The recruited, tested and trained agent must be kept separate from official Soviet institutions abroad. The process of separating the agent is undertaken only after he has handed over to the GRU a significant quantity of secret material, that is, made it impossible for himself to go to the police. The separated agent comes in three guises: the separated acting agent, the agent group and the agent residency.

The most valuable agents, those that provide specially important material, are taken out of residencies very quickly. The moment the Centre feels that such and such an agent is handing over material of exceptional importance, it will immediately demand that no more information or documents are taken from him. All attention is

switched from questions of obtaining information to questions of security and training. The GRU will then take the step of sending him immediately to a soft country to undergo his training there — during a 'holiday', perhaps. If circumstances permit, he may be transferred from the soft country to the Soviet Union. Thence he will go back to his own country, but as an independently acting agent. He will be run exclusively by the Centre, in concrete terms the head of a section, even, in special cases, the head of a directorate and in extreme cases the deputy head of the GRU or the head himself. The running of such an agent is thus carried out exactly as the running of illegals is.

A complex system of non-personal communications and contacts must be worked out for an independent agent. Usually he will transmit his material by means of dead-letter boxes. The residency which was responsible for the agent's recruitment may receive the order to empty such and such a numbered dead-letter box of films. It will not know from whom it is receiving these films, whether from a local illegal or a transiting illegal, an 'artist on tour' as they are still called, or from an agent who has been recruited by that particular residency. The processing of films (which are called *schtchit* — the Russian word for shield) is carried out only in the Centre. The film will be a dual-purpose one. Firstly a pseudo-secret document is photographed on the film by the GRU, then the film is given to the agent and he photographs genuine secret material on it. Any attempt to develop the film outside the walls of the GRU Technical Operations Scientific Research Institute leads to the real secret text being destroyed and only the pseudo-secret text appearing, which is designed to lead the police on a wild goose chase.

The Scientific Research Institute of the GRU has done much important work in developing films of the *schtchit* type. Hundreds, or even possibly thousands, of formulae have been worked out. In each case, for each and every valuable agent, a separate and unrepeatable formula is used. The GRU tries by all possible means to limit the number of personal contacts with independent agents, which is why they are taken out of the residencies. If personal meetings have to take place, they are only carried out in soft countries or secretly in the Soviet Union. In any case, they are carried out extremely rarely.

Other agents recruited by residencies are gradually organised into agent groups of three to five men each. Usually, agents working in one particular field of espionage are put together in one group. Sometimes a group consists of agents who for various reasons are known to each other. Let us suppose that one agent recruits two others. A group automatically organises itself. The GRU obviously considers family groups containing the head of the family and his wife and children to be more secure and stable. The members of such a group may work in completely different fields of espionage. The leader of an agent group is called a *gropovod*, and only he is in contact with Soviet officers. Thus to a certain extent the members of agent groups are completely isolated from Soviet diplomatic representation. The agent group is in contact with the undercover residency for a period of time, then gradually the system of contact with the residency comes to an end and orders begin to be received directly from Moscow. By various channels the group sends its material directly to Moscow. Finally the contact with Moscow becomes permanent and stable and the agent group is entirely separated from the residency. With gradual changes in personnel at the residency, like the resident himself, the cipher officers and the operational officers with whom there was once direct contact, nobody outside the Centre will know of the existence of this particular group. Should it happen that operating conditions become difficult, or that the embassy is blockaded or closed down, the group will be able to continue its activities in the same way as before.

The GRU tolerates personal contacts with group leaders only in exceptional circumstances and where there is favourable security. Agents going into agent groups

do not by any means always know each other, nor is it necessary that they should. They may know the group leader alone, not guessing at the existence of other agents.

An agent group may gradually get bigger as the group leader or his recruiting agent continues to recruit other agents. If the Centre permits a group leader to recruit agents independently, his agent group, even if it consists of only two men, acquires the status of an agent residency, and the group leader becomes the agent resident. This status was acquired by one of the American nuclear physicists whom the GRU permitted to recruit his colleagues at his discretion. Interestingly this agent resident never made a mistake.

Sometimes the GRU will post one or more illegals to an agent residency. The presence of even one Soviet illegal (he is of course considered as the leader) in an agent residency of any size automatically transforms that residency from an agent residency into an illegal residency. This process of increasing the numbers and the gradual self-generation of independent organisations continues endlessly. The process is similar to the spread of a fearful illness, with the difference that, in this case, surgical intervention always gives excellent results. Hundreds of examples have proved this.

If the GRU feels that there is likely to be a clampdown and that operating conditions will become more difficult at any moment, it takes measures to ensure that it does not lose the agent network which has already been recruited but not as yet separated from the undercover residency. With this aim in mind some of the most experienced officers of the undercover residency are in a continual state of readiness so that at any moment, on the order of the Centre, they may go over to illegal status and run the work of their agents. These officers are in possession of previously prepared documents and equipment, and gold, diamonds and other valuables which will be of use to them in their illegal activities will have been hidden in secret hiding-places beforehand. In case of war actually breaking out, these officers will unobtrusively disappear from their embassies. The Soviet government will register a protest and will for a short time refuse to exchange its diplomats for the diplomats of the aggressive country. Then it will capitulate, the exchange will take place and the newly fledged illegals will remain behind in safe houses and flats. Afterwards they will gradually, by using the system of secret rendezvous, begin to establish the system of contacts with agents and agent groups which have recently been subordinated to the undercover residency. Now they all form a new illegal residency. The new illegals never mix and never enter into contact with the old ones who have been working in the country for a long time. This plainly makes life more secure for both parties. The formation of new illegal residencies where there were already old ones in action is yet another example of the constant striving for duplication.

However important the problems of recruiting agents, training them and organising agent networks may be, there is still one overriding objective: the acquisition of secrets belonging to an enemy or a probable enemy. The material acquired by the GRU breaks down into information, documents and specimens or samples. Information includes commentaries and reports. Documents are not the subjective opinions or observations of agents but official secret papers, books, drawings or copies of them. Specimens or samples are self-explanatory: actual weapons, examples of military technology, instruments and equipment which the GRU uses for study and copying.

The photographing of documents and eavesdropping on conversations are in real life exactly as they are portrayed in spy films. But how does the agent contrive to steal secret equipment and remain undetected? Many ways and means exist: we have already examined one of them when we discussed the recruitment of the owners of small private companies producing military equipment. The owner of a small firm has

not much difficulty in producing one extra specimen of an instrument or a gadget and it is very advantageous for him to sell it to the GRU. But what about really big objects like a tank, an aeroplane or an atomic reactor? Not only does one have to obtain such an object without its loss being noticed, but it also has to be transported to the Soviet Union. There is, perhaps surprisingly, a number of solutions to these problems. Samples of objects which can only be used once - rockets, torpedoes, shells, cartridges — are usually stolen during instructional periods, military displays or tests. An entry may be made, for example, in the official accounting documents that there were a hundred launchings of a certain anti-tank rocket whereas in actual fact there were only ninety-nine. The hundredth rocket will have been quietly sold to the GRU without anybody noticing. Very often written-off equipment is able to be sold because there exist official documents certifying that it has been written off or destroyed. One agent suggested to the GRU that he should obtain for them a lateral scanning radar for aircraft which permitted the aircraft to carry out intelligence work on the territory of the enemy while it was actually over its own territory. The GRU, of course, agreed to the suggestion, although the agent said that he did not know exactly when he would be able to acquire the apparatus. It might be within a day or two, it might take years. The GRU agreed to wait. Several months later the agent obtained the apparatus, and a year later it was taken into service with the Soviet Army. The agent worked in an experimental training ground, and when an aircraft equipped with the required apparatus crashed, the agent, in spite of very strict control, was able to steal a broken radar. This was quite sufficient for the Soviet Army to catch up with the United States in that particular field. Frequently agents go as far as deliberately damaging secret arms and equipment so that they can be written off and then sold. Wide use is made of countries of the Third World which receive equipment from Western countries, as was made clear in the GRU's (unsuccessful) attempt to acquire a French Mirage III from the Lebanon. Any armed conflict or change of government is usually accompanied by intense GRU activity, because this is the most favourable time for stealing military technology and armaments.

The diplomatic mail is the most often-used method of transporting specimens to the Soviet Union. The main problem is to transport the specimen into the Soviet embassy. From that time onwards, of course, it crosses all frontiers in sealed packing cases and accompanied by armed diplomatic couriers. Sometimes the difficult problem arises of a specimen weighing several tons which cannot be accommodated in the diplomatic post. This happened when, in one of the countries which had bought Leopard tanks in the Federal Republic of Germany, GRU agents were able to steal a written-off tank engine — an item of exceptional interest to Soviet industry. The theft went unnoticed but the engine weighed more than a ton and there was no way it could be accommodated in diplomatic containers. The Soviet consulate then bought an old cruising yacht. The yacht was straight away sent for a refit and, for a very substantial sum, the small repair workshop installed the heavy tank engine in the yacht. The yacht went to sea on a number of pleasure trips and during one such trip fortuitously met a Soviet trawler. A special team of fitters literally tore the tank engine out of the yacht in a few minutes. The yacht put to sea several times after this to maintain its cover, before being sold.

Another, more reliable method of transporting heavy equipment exists. After an item has been acquired, GRU officers in the guise of a trade delegation will poach from a firm some completely unnecessary item of quite innocent nature. The important thing is that the quantity of containers and their weight approximate to the packing of the secret equipment. Subsequently the markings on the packing cases are changed and they make their way innocently through customs control. So items of exceptional importance are transported to the Soviet Union in the form of equipment for, say, a

canning factory. Sometimes, too, specimens are sent to a safe address in one of the Third World countries where they can be loaded onto Soviet ships without any trouble.

In general terms the GRU leadership is quite confident that it is capable of obtaining any technological secret from the West provided it has been allocated a sufficient sum of money. Only one technological secret exists which the GRU is incapable of obtaining. Even if it did obtain it, the Soviet system would not be able to copy it since for that, the whole structure of communism would have to be changed. Yet this technological secret is of vital importance to the Soviet system. It is the Achilles' heel of socialism — strike at it and socialism will fall to pieces, all invasion, nationalisation and collectivisation will cease. This secret is nothing more than the means of producing bread. Socialism, for all its gigantic resources, is not capable of feeding itself. How easy it would be, one sometimes thinks, to place an embargo on the supply of bread to the Soviet Union, until Soviet forces no longer found themselves in occupied Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, until such time as the Cubans no longer held sway in Africa, until the Berlin Wall disappeared. It would only be necessary to withhold supplies of grain for a few months, and the whole edifice of socialism might fall to pieces.

Chapter Seven

Operational Intelligence

Operational intelligence marks a complete departure from the kind we have talked about until now. It embraces intelligence organisations subordinated to operational units — fronts, fleets, groups of forces, military districts, armies, flotillas — whose job is to aid in the implementation of the military activity. Organisationally, the Soviet Army consists of sixteen military districts and four groups of forces in Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. In war, or at the time of preparations for war, the groups of forces and military districts are transformed into fronts and army groups. Each military district, groups of forces and front has a staff, each with its own intelligence directorate (called RU or Second Directorate of the Military District Staff). The chief of the Second Directorate of the Military District Staff is the chief of all intelligence units of the military district. He is officially called the head of military district intelligence. All twenty heads of military district intelligence and groups of forces are under the command of the head of the GRU Fifth Directorate. The GRU Fifth Directorate supervises the activity of the intelligence directorates, carries out the posting of senior officers of operational intelligence, collates the work experience of all operational intelligence and issues corresponding recommendations and instructions. In addition, the head of intelligence is subordinated to the chief of the military district staff. The chief of staff directs the daily activity of the head of intelligence. The head of intelligence of a military district works exclusively in the interests of his military district, in conformity with the orders of the chief of staff and the commander of the military district. At the same time, all information obtained is forwarded to the GRU too. The role the GRU plays is to collect information from all heads of intelligence and forward to them information obtained by other intelligence organs. Sometimes, the intelligence directorate of the military district may work directly in the interests of the GRU but this must be done only with the agreement of the military district commander. The chief of the general staff is the supreme arbiter in disputes between the commander of the military district and the head of the GRU. However, in practice such disputes occur extremely rarely.

Each front, group of forces and military district consists of armies. Normally a front has an air force, a tank army and two to three all-arms armies. Each army consists of four to seven divisions. Sometimes a corps is included — two to three divisions. Each army and corps has a staff, among whose members is an intelligence section which is called RO [Razvedyvatelnyi otdel] or Army Staff Second Department. The head of the army intelligence section is the head of all intelligence units belonging to a given army. He also ranks below two other officers: the chief of staff of his army, and the chief of intelligence of the military district.

His relationship with his chiefs is based on similar lines. He works exclusively in the interests of his army, obeying the orders of the army commander and the army chief of staff. At the same time, all information acquired by him is also forwarded to the intelligence chief of the military district. A reciprocal arrangement exists whereby the intelligence chief of the military district forwards information to his heads of army intelligence which he has received from other armies, the intelligence directorates of the military districts and the GRU.

The Soviet navy consists of four fleets, the Northern, Pacific, Black Sea and Baltic fleets. Each of the fleets is the equal of a military district, group of forces, and front, and has a staff which includes an intelligence directorate or Naval Staff Second Directorate. Its head is the chief of Naval Intelligence. The naval directorates have the same organisation as those in military districts, fronts and groups of forces. The difference lies in the fact that while the army directorates are subordinated directly to the Fifth Directorate of the GRU, the four naval directorates fall under an organisation called naval intelligence. In its turn naval intelligence comes under the head of the GRU and is controlled by the Fifth Directorate. The reason for this extra organisational step is that ships of all four fleets frequently operate in all oceans as combined squadrons. For this reason the ships need information, not about a narrow sector like the troops of a military district, but on a much wider scale.

Naval intelligence was created to co-ordinate naval information from every ocean of the world, and is a component of the High Staff of the Navy of the USSR. In addition to its normal powerful apparatus for gathering information, there is also the naval cosmic intelligence department. The Soviet Union therefore possesses two independent cosmic intelligence organisations, the GRU's own and the Navy's cosmic intelligence organisation. Although naval cosmic intelligence works in the interests of the High Commander of the Soviet Navy, all information from it is handed over to the GRU. The co-operation between the two cosmic services is co-ordinated by the chief of the General Staff. Should a very serious situation arise, the same task may be set at the same time to both services and the results arrived at then collated and compared.

The organisation of intelligence directorates (RUs) on the staffs of military districts, groups of forces, fronts and fleets is standardised. The intelligence directorate consists of five departments and two groups:

First Department or Department of Reconnaissance directs the activities of the reconnaissance units of the tactical wing, that is, reconnaissance battalions of divisions and reconnaissance companies of regiments. In naval terminology this department is called the Ship Reconnaissance Department. It directs the collection of information which comes directly from serving surface vessels and submarines at sea, bearing in mind that what is meant here are normal warships and not special intelligence collecting ships. The training of officers of First Departments is carried out in the intelligence faculty of the Frunze Military Academy and the corresponding faculty of the Naval Academy. The officers of First Departments are usually experienced army and navy officers who have considerable experience of service in reconnaissance units.

Second Department or Department of Agent Intelligence is concerned with the recruitment of secret agents and the obtaining through them of intelligence information of interest to the staff. The recruitment of agents and the creation of agent networks is carried out on the territories of contiguous countries where the military district concerned would expect to operate in war-time. Naval Intelligence is interested in recruiting agents from all territories, especially in large ports and naval bases. An intelligence centre and three or four intelligence points are subordinated to the Second Department which is directly concerned with agent work.

The centre is concerned with the recruitment of agents in the contiguous state, whereas the intelligence points only recruit agents in specific sectors and areas. They work independently from one another, although they are co-ordinated by the chief of the Second Department. The training of officers for work in the Second Departments and also in centres and points is carried out by the Third Faculty of the Military-Diplomatic Academy (the Academy of the Soviet Army).

The Third Department or Spetsnaz Department is concerned with the preparation and carrying out of diversionary acts on enemy territory, the liquidation of political and military leaders, the destruction of lines of communication and supply and the carrying out of terrorist operations with the aim of undermining the enemy's will to continue fighting. A Spetsnaz intelligence point is subordinated to this department and this carries out the recruitment of agent-terrorists on the territory of any possible future enemy. There is also a Spetsnaz brigade which consists of 1,300 cut-throat soldiers. The officers who work in the Spetsnaz intelligence points and those who direct their activities in the Third Department are trained, rather incongruously, in the Third Faculty of the Military-Diplomatic Academy, although for the Spetsnaz brigade and the officers connected with it training takes place in the Frunze Academy. Analogous organisations can be seen in the Navy, with this difference: the brigades are called Spetsnaz naval brigades (not to be confused with Naval infantry brigades) and the same 'diplomats' direct the activity of all agent-assassins in the fleets.

The Fourth Department or Information Department carries out the collection and collation of all intelligence coming into the intelligence directorate.

The Fifth Department is occupied with electronic intelligence, and this department directs two regiments, the Radio Intelligence Regiment and the Radio-Technical Intelligence Regiment. Radio Intelligence carries out the interception of radio signals and Radio-Technical Intelligence is concerned with tracking emissions from the enemy's radar.

The Intelligence Directorate Technical Facilities Group is occupied with the interpretation of air photographs. The training of specialists for such work is carried on at the Second Kharkov Higher Military Aviation and Engineering School.

The Interpreters' Group or 'the Inquisition' deals with the deciphering and translation of documents obtained, and with the interrogation of prisoners of war. Specialists for this group are prepared at the Military Institute (of Foreign Languages).

The Intelligence Department of the Army Staff

This may be seen as an intelligence directorate in miniature. It has very similar organisation: First Group or Reconnaissance Group: analogous to the First Department of an Intelligence Directorate and concerned with directing tactical reconnaissance, the difference being that it is only responsible for the divisions of one army, whereas the First Department of an Intelligence Directorate is responsible for all the divisions of its military district; Second Group or Secret Intelligence Group; Third Group or Spetsnaz Group: responsible for terrorist acts in the area of operations of its army — a specialist company of 115 cut-throat soldiers is part of it; Fourth Group — Informational; Fifth Group which commands two battalions, radio intelligence and

radio-technical intelligence -the Intelligence Department likewise has its own interpreters.

It would be a mistake to think that operational agent intelligence is a kind of second-class citizen compared with strategic intelligence. Every intelligence directorate is a kind of GRU in miniature with its electronic facilities, information services, secret agents and even, where the fleet is concerned, its independent cosmic service. During the course of a war, or immediately before war breaks out, the power of an intelligence directorate is immeasurably increased by the infiltration in the enemy's rear of thousands of Spetsnaz saboteurs. The intelligence directorates taken altogether form a very powerful intelligence conglomerate, in no way inferior in its scope to strategic intelligence. In other words the GRU, in the form of strategic and operational intelligence, has created two agent networks independent of one another and each duplicating the other. In countries like Norway, Sweden, West Germany, Austria, Turkey, Afghanistan and China the operational intelligence agent network by far exceeds strategic intelligence in strength, effectiveness and invulnerability. This can be confirmed by examining the task of the different intelligence directorates:

Northern Fleet — covering Norway, Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Canada and the USA. There is no doubt that Northern Fleet intelligence is mainly restricted to targets on the sea shore or coastline, although this certainly does not preclude deep agent penetration of the whole territory of the country being investigated, including the central government organs.

Baltic Fleet — covering Sweden, Denmark, West Germany.

Black Sea Fleet — covering Turkey and the whole Mediterranean coastline.

Pacific Fleet — covering the USA, Japan, China, Canada and all countries of the Pacific Basin.

Leningrad Military District — Norway and Sweden. Agent intelligence work is not carried out on Finnish territory, since this country is well inside the Soviet sphere of influence, and its behaviour pleases the Kremlin much more than that of certain Warsaw pact countries, for example, Romania.

Baltic Military District — Sweden, Denmark.

Soviet Groups of Forces in Germany, the Northern Group of Forces in Poland, the Byelorussian Military District — all are concerned with the study of the German Federal Republic.

Central Group of Forces in Czechoslovakia — covering the German Federal Republic and Austria.

Southern Group of Forces in Hungary — Austria.

Carpathian Military District — covering Greece and Turkey from Bulgarian territory.

Kiev and Odessa Military District — Turkey, Austria.

Trans-Caucasian Military District — Turkey, Iran.

Turkestan Military District — Iran, Afghanistan.

Mid-Asian Military District — Afghanistan, China.

Trans-Baikal and Far Eastern Military Districts — China.

Moscow, Northern Caucasian, Volga, Ural and Siberian Military Districts — these do not run agent networks in peace time.

Taking two countries, West Germany and Turkey, as examples, let us analyse the strengths and facilities of strategic and operational intelligence networks and likewise the KGB networks:

West Germany has been infiltrated by: the GRU strategic agent network; several illegal residencies and agent groups; five undercover residencies in Bonn and Cologne, and three Soviet-controlled missions in British, American and French sectors; the Berlin direction of the GRU; it is also covered by the GRU operational agent network. Here, completely independently, work is also carried out by the intelligence directorate

of the Baltic Fleet, Soviet troops in Germany, and the Northern and Central groups of forces in the Byelorussian Military District. In other words West Germany is subject to the attentions of: the agent networks of five intelligence centres; fifteen to eighteen intelligence points plus five intelligence points belonging to the Spetsnaz group; five Spetsnaz brigades and up to fifteen to twenty separate Spetsnaz companies belonging to the same organisation which are at full alert to carry out terrorist acts (the total number of cut-throats is up to 8,000 men). This accounts only for GRU activities. The KGB agent network also runs several illegal residencies and agent groups and two undercover residencies in Bonn and Cologne.

Turkey contains a similar proliferation of Soviet espionage: a GRU strategic agent network in the form of an illegal residency and two undercover residencies in Ankara and Istanbul; a GRU operational network in the form of five intelligence centres belonging to the Carpathian, Odessa, Kiev and Trans-Caucasian Military Districts, and the Black Sea fleet; fifteen to twenty intelligence points, plus five Spetsnaz intelligence points and a corresponding quantity of Spetsnaz brigades. The KGB provides a strategic network (one illegal residency and two undercover residencies); and a KGB operational network. This network is subordinated to the KGB frontier troops.

These two examples provide a blueprint for intelligence activity in many other countries, especially those having common frontiers with the Soviet Union or its satellites.

The basic difference in working methods between strategic and operational intelligence in the GRU is that officers of operational intelligence do not in peace-time work on the territories of target countries. All operations concerning the identification of suitable candidates, their vetting, testing, recruitment, training and all practical work are carried out on the territories within the Eastern bloc or from inside its frontiers. It may be thought that operational intelligence does not have the range and potential of the strategic branch, whose officers mainly work abroad, but this is not so. Without the possibility of recruiting foreigners in their own countries, operational intelligence seeks and finds other ways of establishing the necessary contacts. Its officers exploit every avenue of approach to attract foreigners visiting the Soviet Union and its satellites into their network. Prime attention is paid to students undergoing instruction in Soviet higher educational institutes, and to specialists visiting the Soviet Union as members of delegations. Naval intelligence actively works against sailors from foreign ships calling at Soviet ports, and operational intelligence is equally careful to study the affairs of Soviet and Eastern bloc citizens who have relatives in countries of interest to it.

Operational intelligence is quite unceremonious in using methods of pressurising its candidates, seeing that the recruitment of foreigners is taking place on its own territory. Having recruited one foreigner, the intelligence directorate then uses him for selecting and recruiting other candidates without a Soviet officer taking part. Frequently, one recruitment on Soviet territory is sufficient for the agent who has been recruited to return to his country and recruit several more agents. Contact between agents who have been recruited and their case officers in the Soviet Union is usually carried out by non-personal channels — radio, secret writing, microdots, dead-letter boxes — and couriers are greatly used, too, people like train drivers and conductors, crew members of aircraft and ships and lorry drivers. Personal contact with operational intelligence agents is only carried out on Soviet bloc territory. There exist numerous examples where meetings with agents take place only once every five to seven years, and cases are known where agents have never met their case officer and have never been either on Soviet or satellite territory. A useful example is that of a lorry driver belonging to a large transport company who was recruited by Soviet

operational intelligence whilst visiting Czechoslovakia. Subsequently, having returned to his own country, he recruited a friend who worked in an armaments factory and his brother who lived not far from a very large military airport. The lorry driver only occasionally visited eastern Europe and rarely had contact with Soviet officers because there was always a driver's mate with him. However, every time a journey to eastern Europe was planned, he notified his case officers in good time by means of postcards. Postcards with pre-arranged texts were sent to different addresses in the Eastern bloc and every time the driver crossed into Soviet-controlled territory, officers met him either at customs, or in the restaurant or even the lavatory, to give him short instructions and money. The meetings were carried out in the shortest possible time so that the driver's mate would not suspect anything.

The absence of contact with agents outside territory under the control of the Soviet Union gives GRU operational intelligence exceptional advantages. Firstly, it is extremely difficult to unmask and expose such agents; secondly, and perhaps more important, the Soviet officers of operational intelligence have no chance to defect to the West and expose the activities of the agents recruited by them. (In strategic intelligence this occurs quite regularly but we have as yet not one example of it happening amongst operational intelligence officers.)

Yet another important advantage of operational intelligence, and one which gives it exceptional invulnerability, is its diversification. A defecting officer from strategic intelligence can say a lot about the activities of the central apparatus of the GRU, but an officer of the operational network who did succeed in defecting would be able to reveal only one or two intelligence points or centres — and there are more than a hundred of these in the Soviet Army. Each of them is carefully isolated from the others and, to a great extent, camouflaged. Centres and points are mostly found on the premises of military buildings of exceptional importance, and consequently with the maximum possible protection. Even if an officer did succeed in disclosing the true significance of a particular building, he could only say that it was, for example, a store for nuclear weapons or a rocket depot; it would be almost impossible to determine that in addition there was also an intelligence point. Cases are known where intelligence points have been located on the premises of the personal country houses of important generals or the well-guarded premises of punishment battalions (in other words, military prisons). And the diversification of the operational networks in no way indicates the absence of co-ordination. All these organs and organisations are included in a rigid pyramid system headed by the Fifth GRU Directorate (in turn, of course, subject to the head of the GRU). However, in the activities of the intelligence directorates there exists a certain freedom which invariably engenders useful initiative. The GRU central apparatus prefers not to interfere in the daily running of the intelligence directorates provided that they work in a productive manner and toe the line. The GRU will occasionally interfere, in cases where two different directorates have recruited the same agent, although it will always encourage a situation where different intelligence directorates recruit agents for the same target. For example, the intelligence directorate of a group of forces once recruited an agent for an important scientific research target. Unwittingly the intelligence directorate of another group of forces recruited another agent for the same target. Both agents provided almost identical information which was eventually received in Moscow where it was carefully analysed. The moment one of the agents began to provide false information, it was spotted by the Fifth Directorate which demanded that work should stop with one agent and that there should be greater vigilance in the work with the other agent. Independent penetration is, as we know, practised at all levels in the GRU. The head of an intelligence point may check his agents and reveal negative aspects in their work in good time. The heads of intelligence in military districts check the heads of

points and centres and the head of the GRU checks his heads of military district intelligence. An illegal agent network may be used to check the agents of the undercover residencies and operational agent networks and vice-versa. Of course nobody suspects that he is engaged in checking somebody else. All anybody knows is that he is procuring material for the GRU.

Spetsnaz intelligence is the sharpest and most effective weapon in the hands of the heads of intelligence directorates or departments. It consists of two elements — Spetsnaz agents and Spetsnaz detachments. Spetsnaz agents are recruited by an intelligence point, and the whole process of recruiting and running agent-saboteurs is identical to the work with ordinary agents of operational intelligence. However, their tasks differ in essence. The basic task of the procurement agent is to provide necessary information. The task of the Spetsnaz agent is to carry out terrorist acts. Intelligence directorates try to recruit these agents from within the most important economic and transport targets. On receipt of orders, they must be able and willing to carry out acts of sabotage upon these targets. For the GRU the most important thing is to render unserviceable power and transport targets, electric power stations, electric power lines, oil and gas pipelines, bridges, tunnels and railway equipment. Great stress is placed on carrying out acts of sabotage which will have a strong effect on the morale of the inhabitants over a wide area, such as the blowing up of a large dam or the burning of oil storage tanks. Spetsnaz agents form the so-called 'sleeping' agent network which does no work in peace-time but springs into action the moment hostilities break out. Operational intelligence tries to limit its meetings with these agents to exceptional cases.

The Spetsnaz detachment is quite different. It is the true elite of the Soviet armed forces. Its members are crack soldiers and officers. On Soviet territory they wear the uniform of airborne troops, on satellite territories they are disguised as auxiliary detachments, normally signals units. (Of course they have no connection with airborne troops or signals. Eight divisions of airborne troops are subject to the commander of airborne forces, who in his turn is answerable only to the Minister of Defence. The airborne forces form a strategic element acting exclusively in the interests of the higher command.) Spetsnaz detachments are an organ of the operational field and act in the interests of fronts, fleets and armies. The Soviet Army includes four naval Spetsnaz brigades (one to each fleet); sixteen Spetsnaz brigades — one to each group of forces and the basic military districts; and forty-one separate companies.

A Spetsnaz brigade consists of a headquarters company, three or four airborne battalions and support detachments. In all there are 900 to 1,300 soldiers and officers ready to carry out terrorist operations in the rear of the enemy. A Spetsnaz naval brigade is similar, containing a headquarters company, a group of midget submarines, a battalion of parachutists and two or three battalions of frogmen. Sometimes the Spetsnaz naval brigade is confused with the brigade of the fleet marine infantry, mainly because naval Spetsnaz use the uniform of marine infantry to disguise their soldiers and officers. Spetsnaz companies in armies and tank armies consist of three platoons of saboteurs and one communications platoon. This means that, all told, there are in peace-time alone 27,000 to 30,000 first-class saboteurs available. During mobilisation this number can be increased by four- or five-fold by recalling reservists who have previously served in these detachments.

The deployment of saboteurs in the enemy's rear is normally carried out by parachute, though in the fleets frogmen also take part. Spetsnaz hardly ever use helicopters, because the deployment generally takes place at a considerable distance from the front line. Small groups of Spetsnaz brigades are dropped at a depth of 500 to 1,000 kilometres to act in the interests of the frontal forces who will be attacking

through areas cleared by atomic action, air attacks and sabotage activities. Simultaneously with the dropping of the front brigade, each army taking part carries out the dropping of its own Spetsnaz companies. These are also dropped in small groups, a maximum of fifteen consisting of five or six men each, at depths of 100 to 500 kilometres. There are usually three or four armies and one tank army in each front, so in the course of an attack at a frontal level there are one brigade and four or five separate companies operating at a depth from 100 to 1,000 kilometres in the rear of the enemy. In other words around 250 groups totalling 1,500 to 1,700 men. It must be added that, on West German territory for example, preparations are in hand for not one, but four or five fronts to operate. At the same time the Spetsnaz agents are activated.

The Spetsnaz detachments have two basic duties: the destruction of the system of the State government and its armies, that is the destruction of staff, command points, networks and lines of communication; and the destruction of nuclear weapons and the means of supplying them — attacks on depots and stores of nuclear weaponry and rockets, aerodromes, rocket launchers and launching pads. Simultaneously with these two basic tasks, the Spetsnaz detachments strive to disorganise the internal life of the State and Army and to sow uncertainty and panic.

In carrying out the first task, the leading role is allocated to the staff companies of the Spetsnaz brigades. These companies differ from other detachments of Spetsnaz in that they are not manned by soldiers who are serving their time, but by professional men, 'ensigns'. These Spetsnaz staff companies are specially trained for the kidnapping or destruction of State leaders of the enemy, members of the government and senior military commanders. Their existence is cloaked in the very strictest secrecy. Frequently, many officers and sergeants of Spetsnaz brigades do not even suspect the existence of such companies in their brigades. They are kept apart from the normal brigade and camouflaged as parachutists, boxers, wrestlers, unarmed combat experts, marksmen, even sports teams of the military district. The staff company of the Spetsnaz brigade is the only unit which carries out its tasks not in camouflaged uniform but in civilian clothes or in the military or police uniform of the enemy. These companies are also the only ones amongst the Spetsnaz detachments which, in the course of military operations, may establish contact and act together with the agent-saboteurs of Spetsnaz. All the remaining units of saboteurs undertake night flights, mine-laying and the seizure of prisoners in order to obtain information. Tanks and other armoured fighting vehicles (AFVs) belonging to the enemy are of special interest for saboteurs, and all groups have the task of making sudden attacks on AFVs with the aim of stealing them for future use in attacks against given targets. Several groups may take part in an attack on a certain target, and after the attack they will disperse and go their own ways. There is a constant alternation between the collecting of information and the carrying out of sabotage acts. A group may collect information on enemy troop movements in a certain region and transmit the information to its staff, then it may destroy a rocket launcher in another area, then go on to collect more information on troop movements. Everything depends on the tasks set to the group and the initiative of the group commander. When prisoners are taken, the saboteurs know no laws or humanity in their methods of interrogation; nobody who has been in any way connected with Spetsnaz will deny their brutality, which extends even to their own members, because speed of results is paramount. They will kill their own wounded -the group cannot transport a wounded man, nor can it let him fall into the hands of the enemy. And if a rocket launcher or an aircraft carrying nuclear weapons is ready for action, they will attack it even if it means the inevitable destruction of the entire group.

Let us examine one case study which underlines both the importance and effectiveness of operational intelligence. The greatest interest for the staff of military districts is not the political situation or technology but pure military information: the deployment, numbers, equipment and plans of the troops of a probable enemy in sectors where an attack by Soviet forces is likely. An agent who had been recruited by the second department of the intelligence directorate of the Byelorussian Military District on West German territory selected places for parachute landings by the Spetsnaz groups. He photographed these locations and made diagrams. Obviously, since the prime motive was sabotage, his choices were near important bridges, dams and narrow passes in lakeland areas. His photographs were transported by courier into East Germany to one of the intelligence points of the Byelorussian Military District. Copies were also sent to the third and fourth departments of the Byelorussian Military District intelligence directorate. While they were being studied, an officer noticed a group of American soldiers who kept on appearing in close-up. The soldiers were doing something at a kind of metal hatchway on the side of the road, and the suggestion was put forward that they were laying a cable for military communications. This was scotched by officers of the fifth department who had been invited for consultations and who said categorically that the Americans would not have a cable in that region. The laying of military cable on West German territory would in any case be discovered by agents of the military district. In the opinion of the signals officers, the photographs showed that the soldiers' work was unlikely to be concerned with cables. The photographs were immediately dispatched to the GRU information service, where a new suggestion was put forward. Could these not be anti-personnel land mines which are prepared in peace-time where Soviet sabotage units might be active in the event of war? This suggestion greatly alarmed the GRU leadership. The fifth directorate immediately gave orders to all intelligence directorates running agents in West Germany to pay particular attention to the activities of small groups of soldiers in the neighbourhood of important bridges, dams, railway stations and crossroads. At the same time, the first GRU directorate gave similar orders to all its residents in West Germany. A month later, the information service of the GRU had at its disposal thousands of photographs of groups of soldiers working at metallic hatchways. Every hatchway that had been discovered was marked on a map. This alone did not permit a final conclusion to be drawn about the significance of the hatchways, and the GRU had a series of enlargements taken from a distance of not more than one metre. The photographic interpreters were interested to see that the thickness of the hatchways was no greater than that of the wall of a good safe, but the locks would have been the envy of any bank. This led to the opinion that the land mines were of a more complicated design. Further analysis showed that the mine-shafts were very deep, and sometimes placed at some hundreds of metres from the object which they were supposed to destroy in case of war. It was this which finally convinced the specialists that it was not a case of ordinary land mines, but of a nuclear variety, whose purpose was not to counter a parachute attack but to halt all Soviet troops in case they began an attack on Europe. Simultaneously, one of the GRU residencies on West German territory acquired documentary evidence confirming the conclusions of the information service.

The possibility of nuclear land mines being used completely disrupted all Soviet plans for a blitzkrieg attack on Europe. The general staff, the Ministry of Defence and the Central Committee would now have to find new ways of attack, new methods of employing their troops and ways and means of surmounting strong radioactive fallout caused by the underground explosions. In a word, all tactics, operational methods and strategic plans would have to be changed. All this was thanks to the fact that the new NATO tactics had become known to the general staff in good time.

Chapter Eight

Tactical Reconnaissance

There is yet another level to the practice of military intelligence. Intelligence organs and detachments subject to tactical units and formations of divisional strength and below, which facilitate their military operations, come under the heading of tactical reconnaissance. Their activities are under the full control of operational intelligence, which of course comes under the control of the GRU central apparatus. So all tactical reconnaissance organs have, in exactly the same way as operational intelligence organs, a twofold subordination. The head of reconnaissance of a division is subordinated to the chief of army intelligence, more accurately the first group of the Army Intelligence Department. The chief of regimental reconnaissance is subordinate to the regimental chief of staff and the chief of divisional reconnaissance. Each motorised-rifle and tank division has on its strength an independent reconnaissance battalion. The word 'independent' shows that the battalion does not form part of the regiment but is directly subject to the divisional staff. Each of the four motorised-rifle and tank regiments on the strength of a division has a reconnaissance company. Reconnaissance companies are controlled by the regimental reconnaissance chiefs. Artillery and anti-aircraft missile regiments are not included as their reconnaissance detachments are not active in the enemy's rear.

A divisional independent reconnaissance battalion consists of a headquarters, a deep reconnaissance company, two reconnaissance companies, a company electronic reconnaissance and auxiliary services.

Deep Reconnaissance

The deep reconnaissance company is the smallest but the best of all the companies and batteries of the division. There are twenty-seven men in the company including six officers and an ensign. It has a small headquarters of the commander and a sergeant-major, and five reconnaissance groups of four men, each with an officer at its head. There is a total of six jeeps, each group having one and one for the commander.

The company's task is to discover and destroy enemy rocket launchers in its divisional sector. Deep reconnaissance groups are deployed in the enemy's rear by helicopter, either with or without their jeeps, to depths of from thirty to 100 kilometres.

On discovering an enemy rocket installation, the group immediately reports it to the staff. Should the rocket be ready for launching, the group must attack it. However, unlike the Spetsnaz groups, the group will not kill its wounded unless the action is on foot — a rare occurrence. The deep reconnaissance company may also be called upon to kidnap staff officers and to hunt for their staffs, but only in cases where the commander of a division is certain that there are no enemy nuclear facilities in his divisional sector.

The Reconnaissance Companies of the Battalion have exactly similar organisation. In each company there are three tanks, seven reconnaissance vehicles and ten motorcycles.

The Electronic Reconnaissance Companies have eighty men and thirty vehicles with electronic equipment. The company operates only from its own territory. Among its tasks are intercepting and deciphering radio conversations of the enemy, taking bearings on radio stations and radio locators, and monitoring the extent to which its own side observes radio security regulations.

Each motor-rifle and tank regiment has its own reconnaissance company. Regimental companies operate at a depth of up to fifty kilometres as against the battalion company's operation to eighty kilometres. All these companies penetrate enemy territory under their own power, using gaps in the enemy's defence. The basic method of obtaining information is the capture and cruel interrogation of prisoners.

The Soviet army has approximately 180 motor-rifle and tank divisions. Many of these, especially those deployed in the rear, are under strength. Undermanning is never allowed, however, in the case of reconnaissance detachments. There is about the same number of independent reconnaissance battalions, and there are also about 700 regimental reconnaissance companies. In other words there are about 95,000 men directly under GRU command in tactical reconnaissance. We have not included in this number the strength of chemical, engineering and artillery reconnaissance companies independent of these.

Chapter Nine

The Training and Privileges of Personnel

These are the educational institutions which take part in the training of personnel for Soviet military intelligence: the Intelligence Faculty at the General Staff Academy; the Training Centre of Illegals; the Military- Diplomatic Academy; the Reconnaissance Faculty of the Frunze Military Academy; the Reconnaissance Faculty of the Naval Academy; the Special Faculty of the Military Signals Academy; the Military Institute of Foreign Languages; the Cherepovetski Higher Military Engineering School for Communications; the Special Faculty of the Higher Military Naval School of Radio Electronics; the Spetsnaz Faculty of the Ryazan Higher Parachute School; the Reconnaissance Faculty of the Kiev Higher Military Command School; and the Special Faculty of the Second Kharkov Higher Military Aviation and Engineering School.

This list gives an impression of the extent of the training of specialists for the GRU system. Some of these educational establishments are devoted exclusively to this work, others have only one faculty. However, in any case, we are talking of many thousands of first-class specialists who go into military intelligence every year. All the higher military schools give instruction at university level to their students. The best of these subsequently enter the academies which provide a second university education.

Students entering the Soviet Army's higher military training establishments undergo a period of instruction which lasts for four to five years. The minimum age is seventeen, maximum twenty-four. Candidates must have finished secondary education and be of normal mental and physical development with a suitable ideological background. They sit an entrance examination and are interviewed by a medical commission; they then take a competitive examination. The vast majority of them have no idea of the true character of the educational establishment they have chosen. In some cases, the name of the school gives a reasonably exact idea of the subjects studied in it. The Ulyanov Guards Higher Tank Command School leaves little to the imagination. But what does a name like the Serpukhovski Higher Command Engineering School tell us? If a candidate chooses it, he may be surprised to find himself learning about strategic missile troops. Signals schools are largely the same — the candidate has little idea of exactly what subjects are studied there. He selects one of them, the Cherepovetski school, say, and finds himself in strategic intelligence. The point is that there is no choice.

Graduates of higher command schools receive the rank of lieutenant and a university diploma on graduating. Graduates of higher military engineering schools receive the rank of engineer lieutenant and an engineering diploma. After graduation, the officer is posted to a unit on the instructions of the General Staff, and from the first day of his service his fight with his fellow officers for the right of entry to the academy begins. The academy is the passport to the higher echelons of the Army. Without passing through the academy, the officer may serve on until major or lieutenant-colonel level at the most. Success in the academy opens wide horizons and speeds up progress on the promotion ladder. The officer may submit his first application to the academy after three years of service. The application is confirmed at every level of command, beginning with his immediate superior. Any higher commander may hold up the application under any pretext: that the officer is too young; too old; too stupid; or too clever. In which case the officer will put off his application until the next year ... and the next year, and so on possibly for all his twenty-five years of service.

There are more than fifteen military academies in the Soviet Army, but for most officers it does not matter which one he gets into. The important thing is to get into one of them. If his commanders decide that an officer is suitable, he must still pass examinations and undergo a rigorous entrance competition. The period of study at all the academies is three years, and they are all similar bar one, the General Staff Academy. To enter it there is no competition and no examinations, nor are there applications for entry. Candidates are selected by the Central Committee from the number of the most successful and dedicated colonels and generals up to and including colonel-general, who have already completed their study at one of the military academies.

The General Staff Academy is the passport to the very highest levels of Soviet military leadership. The colonel or general continues to serve and never suspects that he may suddenly receive from the Central Committee an invitation to attend yet a third spell of university education. The General Staff Academy is the highest dream of the most eager careerists.

Let us examine the progress of an intelligence officer on the promotion ladder. As a graduate of the intelligence faculty of the Kiev Higher Command School, for example, he will be posted to the command of a reconnaissance detachment of a regiment or division. Here begins the officer's gradual upward movement on the service ladder, from platoon commander to company commander to commander of regimental reconnaissance and deputy commander of reconnaissance battalions. To secure further promotion, the officer must now enter the reconnaissance faculty of the Frunze military academy. This same faculty is also open to graduates of the Spetsnaz faculty of the Ryazan Higher Parachute School. All officers study there together and then return to their own units, only this time with a higher command.

So far all this is straightforward, provided that the officer's superiors co-operate in signing the necessary documents. But one institute, the Military Institute instructing in foreign languages, is rather peculiar. This is a privileged establishment for the children of the highest echelons of the Soviet Army. The Institute exists on the same basis as the Military Academy, although young people enter it according to the rules laid down for military schools. This means, in fact, that a candidate's father has only to worry about placing his little son on the first rung of the military ladder and the ladder itself will move upwards.

The period of study in the institute is from five to seven years depending on the faculty. The student receives education to the level of that of the military school and the rank of lieutenant; he then proceeds with his training as he would in a normal military academy. That is to say, these scions of the military aristocracy are spared

the rigours of genuine military service as well as the cruel competition between officers for the right of entry to a military academy. Everything proceeds automatically.

The Institute is not only a stepping-stone to the highest Army ranks, but to the highest ranks of the KGB too. The conditions of acceptance are naturally graded according to rank: for the children of colonel-generals and higher, there are no examinations; the children of lieutenant-generals undergo a very cursory examination; and the children of major-generals undergo the most rigorous examination. However, in order to soften this clear class distinction, the Institute every year accepts a ten per cent intake of 'non-aristocrats', sons of colonels and majors, sometimes even of workers and kolkhozniks.

Discipline and competition are fearsome. Should any student commit the slightest offence, he is speedily expelled from the Institute in disgrace. But there is a deeply-entrenched set of privileges too. For the sons of lieutenant-generals, and colonel-generals even more so, the special entrance provides for the appointment of individual tutors and the taking of examinations privately at home, so that the candidate does not get nervous. For colonel-generals and above, there exists the privilege of being able to send not only their sons to the Institute, but also their daughters, who constitute a special little group. The girls are given instruction in French for the sake of prestige and in English for obvious commercial reasons. They, together with everybody else, receive officer's rank. They will find their way into the Ministry of Defence.

After the Institute's final examinations, interested organisations carry out their selection of the graduates. The first selection is carried out by the KGB and the GRU according to the principle of 'one for you, one for me'. There is no friction, firstly because the system has been laid down for many years and secondly because KGB and GRU have different interests.

The KGB is quite happy to choose the sons of high-ranking, serving KGB officers, but the GRU devotes its attentions largely to the proletarian ten per cent. For two principal reasons the GRU has had a long-standing rule that it will not admit the sons of high-placed parents into its organisation, nor will it admit children of GRU officers whatever post they occupy. Only after a father retires from the GRU can his son be considered for admission. The reasoning goes that if a son is refused something the father may refuse the same thing to all his subordinates. Secondly, there is no father who really wants to risk his own career by linking it with that of a son who is on agent work and to whom anything could happen. This principle of the GRU's has to a very great extent eradicated corruption in the selection of officers, although corruption flourishes in other GRU fields of activity. (The KGB has adopted diametrically opposed principles. Everywhere within it are the children of Tchekists, frequently under the direct supervision of their fathers. This is justified by the false notion of handing down traditions from father to son.)

The unclassified name of the institution is 'military unit 35576'. Its secret designation is the Soviet Army Academy. Its top secret designation is the Military-Diplomatic Academy of the Soviet Army. Regardless of the abundance of names, none gives any idea of what is studied there. If somebody wanted to convey an idea of its activities by means of a name, then that name would most probably be something like the Military Academy of Agent Intelligence. Very few people inside the Soviet Union know of the existence of this academy, and should any officer ever hear a rumour about it, and write an application to enter it, immediate enquiries would be made to

establish the source of the information. One may rest assured that a culprit would be found and put in prison for spreading government secrets. For spreading a secret like the existence of the Soviet Army Academy the sentence is ten years in prison, perhaps fifteen, perhaps even the 'ultimate sanction'. Those connected with the Academy understand this rule and obey it enthusiastically.

The GRU seeks out candidates for the Academy and secretly suggests to officers that they should enter. Before making this proposal to an officer, the officer will of course have been very carefully checked out by the GRU, who must not only be certain that he will agree but will also have obliged him to sign a document about the divulging of military secrets. In this document are described all the unpleasant things which await him, should he decide to share his secrets with anybody else. However, they do not tell him any secrets. They simply tell him that there exists a certain academy which is keen to welcome him as a student. To his question as to what sort of studies he will undergo, he receives the answer that the work is very interesting. There will be no soldiers and no hierarchy of rank, and the conditions of life are vastly better than those of any other organisation known to him.

At the outset this is all they will entrust to him. The GRU holds nobody against his will and is perfectly frank about future privileges. For the GRU officer who completes the Academy, success is assured — unless he makes a mistake, in which case retribution is equally swift. He may either be deprived of overseas work and be sent instead to work in the central organs of the GRU in Moscow; he may be deprived of work in the GRU and sent back to the Army; and finally, he may be shot. All of these punishments, not only the last, are regarded as harsh in the extreme. The first means the end of overseas life, and GRU officers are envious even of dustmen overseas. The second means an end to privilege and the sweet life within the GRU, and a return to the grindstone of life as an ordinary Soviet officer. The third is only marginally worse.

The Soviet Army Academy is located in Moscow on Narodnogo Opolchenia Street, but many of its secret branches are scattered all over the place disguised as innocent offices, flats or hotels. The central building reminds one of an elegant museum with its Greek colonnade and richly carved ornamentation. Around it are several large buildings, and the whole is surrounded by a very high iron lattice-work fence. The area wallows in greenery so that nothing can be seen. There are no name plates or number plates on the building. From the outside there is little to indicate that it is secret. Only sometimes on the upper storeys and in certain windows can one see grilles and casements covered in cord nets, an indication that within those rooms there is work on top secret documents being carried out. The string nets are so that no pieces of paper can be blown out of the windows by draughts.

The Academy is an integral part of the GRU. The chief of the Academy has the military rank of colonel-general and is a deputy head of the GRU, not of course first deputy head. The chief of the Academy has four deputies who are lieutenant-generals beneath him. These are the first deputy and the deputies for the political, administrative-technical and academic sections.

The first deputy is in charge of the graduate school, four faculties and academic courses. The political deputy is responsible for the state of political awareness and the morale of all officers of the Academy. The administrative-technical deputy is responsible for the personnel department and the security department (with the commandant's office and a company of security guards) together with the finance, stores and transport departments. Under him there are also the libraries, including collections of secret and top secret literature. The deputy for the academic section has under him the academic sub-faculties which are headed by major-generals. These sub-faculties are strategic agent intelligence, operational agent intelligence and Spetsnaz (dealing with the armed forces of likely enemies), strategic and operational

trade-craft of the Soviet Army, foreign languages and study of countries, history of international relations and diplomatic practice and, finally, Marxist-Leninist philosophy.

The first and second faculties prepare their students for the central GRU apparatus. However, the first faculty is called the Special Services Faculty and the second the Military-Diplomatic Faculty, and it is officially considered that the first faculty prepares officers for civilian cover — embassies, civil airlines, merchant navy, trade representations — while the second faculty prepares its students for military cover. But we must again remember that Soviet military attaches are the same GRU officers as those who work under civil cover. They face the same tasks and use the same methods as all other officers of the GRU. For this reason the instructional programme in both faculties is absolutely identical. Furthermore, when students have completed their studies, in whichever of the two faculties that might be, the GRU will post them under whatever cover they consider suitable. Many of the officers who have studied in the first faculty will find themselves working in military organisations and vice-versa. The artificial distinction exists in order to further the following aims: to confuse Western intelligence services and to create the illusion that there is some difference between military attaches and other GRU officers; to segregate the students for security reasons (a defector will not know all his fellow students, only half — with this in mind the first faculty is isolated from the central block of the academy buildings); to simplify control over individual students; and finally, since the academy is after all designated as a military-diplomatic academy, it seems wise that not all its faculties should bear names connected with espionage.

The third faculty deals with operational agent intelligence and Spetsnaz intelligence, preparing officers for intelligence directorates of military districts. There exists a deep enmity between officers of the first two faculties and officers of the third. An officer of one of the two strategic faculties, however newly arrived, feels the very deepest contempt for all those studying in the third faculty. He will be going abroad but the despised third faculty student will recruit agents from Soviet or satellite territory only. But fate can be cruel — and kind. When the worst (usually the most arrogant) officers have graduated from the strategic faculties, they are sent to operational agent intelligence; in their place are taken the best of the officers graduating from the third faculty.

The fourth faculty, like the first, is not located on the academy premises. Moreover, its individual courses and groups are separated among themselves in conditions of the strictest secrecy. The fourth faculty trains foreigners — Poles, Germans, Czechs, Hungarians, Bulgars, Mongols and Cubans. Naturally, not one of these has ever set foot in the academy buildings and has no idea where the academy is located; equally naturally, the Soviet trainees in the academy must not have even the slightest contact with their 'brothers'.

For each of these students in the Soviet Army academy, a special personal cover story will have been worked out. Frequently, many of them will study for a year in some normal military academy concerned with tank or artillery studies, for example, before spending their three to four years on secret premises. And these students do not receive diplomas from the Soviet Army Academy. Their diplomas come from, for example, the Tank Warfare Academy. Only a handful of people will know what is hidden under this name.

The academic courses are something different. These are designed not to provide a complete training, but only partial one, and the period of study is only one year. They are attended principally by the most experienced officers and those with the greatest future prospects, who were chosen for entry to strategic faculties of the academy but then transferred by the GRU into the diplomatic (civil) or overseas trade academy where they completed a full course of study. They are considered on a par with the

other civil students and carry out their specialised training in their spare time and receive the same diplomas as the graduates of the two strategic faculties, having already received genuine diplomatic diplomas. This is the most secret part of Soviet intelligence after illegals, for even genuine 'clean' diplomats consider them their own kind and do not suspect their intelligence connections. The academic courses are also attended by graduates of the Military Foreign Languages Institute who have been chosen by the GRU for work abroad. The GRU uses them in residencies mainly for duties with technical and technical-operational services. After a first assignment abroad these may, provided they have served successfully, enter the academy in one of the strategic faculties. Lastly, the academy receives specialists from other fields whom the GRU invites to work in technical services or on information work.

There is a post-graduate school too, which prepares scientific personnel for the GRU and also instructors for the academy itself. An officer who has completed one of the strategic faculties, and has been abroad on agent work and shown good results, is accepted by the post-graduate school for a period of instruction of two to three years during which he must prepare and defend a scientific dissertation on a subject chosen by himself. The resulting qualification is a scientific degree, Master of Military Science.

Who is eligible? This is a very complex problem. The candidate who hopes to please the GRU must fulfil the following conditions: racial purity — there must be no Jewish blood as far back as the fourth generation (the KGB has no such restriction); ideological stability and purity; membership of the communist party; the absence of any contact with overseas, excepting the 'liberation' of Hungary and Czechoslovakia and the 'defence of socialism in eastern Europe'. He must have a wife and children of complete ideological and racial purity. He must have strong and reliable family connections, on his own side and his wife's. There must be no compromising material on the files of any of their relatives. None of his relatives may have been either prisoners of war in Germany, nor on Soviet territory under the temporary occupation of German forces. And there must be no signs whatsoever of alcoholism, sexual promiscuity, family problems, corruption and so on, nor must the officer have any prominent distinguishing features or speech defects.

One of the most difficult things in selecting candidates is to find people who understand the political situation in the world and can clearly see possible future developments without being secret free-thinkers. Obviously anyone who is politically inept is not acceptable to the GRU, but if a man is moderately intelligent, there is always the danger that secret doubts will begin to penetrate his head. Naturally, when this rare creature is found he is instantly made to sit meaningless examinations and, from the very first day, accorded appropriate honours.

In a classless society, everybody is equal and life is therefore happy and free. All people are friends and brothers and nobody will try to do his neighbour down. People may pursue their ambitions without let or hindrance. Of course, if you live in the country, you cannot move to the city, still less the capital Moscow, without the permission of the Central Committee. Society may be classless, all right, but it is divided, for the good of the people, into parts — you have the right to live in the city or you have not. You may rightly say that you would prefer to live in the city, but you are branded from birth — if you were born in the country, you must stay there and so must your children and grandchildren — for their own good. Unless — unless you do something like become a GRU officer. Immediately, you will find yourself in Moscow, with a permanent residence permit. This is good news for not only you, but your children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren down to the fortieth generation, who will all have Moscow residence permits and will legally reside in Moscow.

It is as if you had moved onto a higher sphere, as if you and your relations had suddenly been ennobled. You should draw your family tree on the wall of your apartment so that future generations of your family will know who it was who lifted them up to the heights.

In capitalist societies, where everybody is naturally out for each other's blood, people move around chaotically, causing untold social problems. These could all be eradicated with the introduction of residence permits on the Soviet model. The Moscow residence permit, logically, is the first privilege of a GRU officer. There are others, of course. For example, an ordinary general staff officer is unable to buy a car during the whole of his life unless of course he steals or is sent abroad. A GRU officer may in three years buy not only a car, but also an apartment. Drawing another distinction, it is often asked how much more a GRU officer abroad earns in comparison with the same officer in Moscow. It is impossible to answer this question sensibly, because in Moscow the officer spends money which is to all practical purposes incapable of buying anything except food of rather inferior quality and equally inferior clothes. He who is sent abroad, however, receives foreign currency and can buy everything he needs both while he is abroad and at home in the Soviet Union in the special foreign currency shops. In possessing foreign currency a GRU officer becomes a man of completely different class, very sharply distinguished from all those who do not have it. Special shops and restaurants are open to him, where he can buy anything he wants, without queueing. The ordinary Soviet citizen, including the general staff officer or even the GRU officer who does not serve abroad, may not even enter these shops.

So Soviet society is as racial as it can possibly be, only race is not determined by the colour of your skin but by whether you have the right to travel abroad or not. Imagine any country, France perhaps, putting up outside shops the announcement that: 'Nobody of French nationality is allowed to enter this shop. Only those on the list of the Central Committee of the Communist Party are admitted.' But in the Soviet Union there are everywhere shops, hotels, restaurants which Russians may not enter, because they are Russian. Life for a GRU officer possessing foreign currency is on an infinitely wider scale than for the 270 million who are deprived of the right to hold foreign currency. And once he has become a representative of the upper class, he becomes inordinately jealous of his right, fearing above anything the loss of the privilege which allows him to travel abroad. This is why he defends himself against any revelation about his own person, against any, even the most insignificant, contacts with the police. This is why he tries to hide from his superiors even the smallest shortcomings. This is why he is capable of any dirty trick upon anybody, including his own comrades, when what is at stake is whether he should remain another year in a hot, humid, subtropical posting — or return early to Moscow.

Conclusion

For a GRU officer, there are countries in which he dreams of working. There are also countries in which he would rather not work. There are cities he dreams of, and cities he sees in nightmares.

The dream city for a GRU officer is Peking. Its infernal counterpart— Tokyo. This might appear strange, because for the top brass of the GRU quite the reverse is true: Tokyo is heaven, Peking hell. But the interests of a GRU officer are directly opposed to the interests of the top brass. The top brass desire high productivity, while the work force has rather different aims.

Imagine that you are lucky and are posted to China. What awaits you? A vast, splendid embassy behind high walls. Chit-chat with colleagues from other embassies, gossip about the state of health of the Chinese leaders and the Ambassador's wife. After five years your return home, obviously without having recruited any agents. But nobody will bawl you out for it, you will not have your epaulettes torn off, no one will call you lazy or a coward. Everyone understands that you have been in hell, where serious work is impossible....

And now imagine that you are an unlucky spy and the GRU post you to Tokyo. Both you and the GRU top brass know that there are no laws against spying there, that conditions for spying are ideal. So what awaits you? Exhausting stressful work, fifteen to seventeen hours a day, with no rest days and no feast days. No matter how many secrets you manage to acquire it will never be enough. No matter how many agents you recruit it will never be enough. Your paradise will be snowed under with cipher cables from Moscow addressed to the resident saying: 'You have seventy operational officers! Where's your productivity? What you managed to get yesterday we have already received from Hong Kong! From Berlin! From illegals! Where are the secrets!!!???' You may rest assured that this question is put by the GRU daily to the resident—who will in turn ask you the same question, pounding the table with his enormous fist. He will fight for the kind of productivity that can only be achieved through merciless competition. If your output is not up to scratch you will simply be sent home and your career broken.

Personally I have never been to Tokyo, but I have had to work in a country which was considered 'paradise' by the GRU top brass. Understandably, for us it was 'hell'. A weak police system in that country meant that the other residents continually used it as an intermediate base for their operations, and it was a busy crossing point for GRU illegals, too. All of them had to be taken care of and helped. Acting as a supply base for agent network operations is rather like serving in a signals unit during a war: as long as communication lines are maintained nobody remembers you, but should communications be interrupted the signaller is sent to a penal battalion forthwith, charged with the failure of the entire operation. The difference between us and the signals boys lay in the fact that no matter how well we maintained supplies, how successful our own work was, we also had to recruit agents. After all, we were living in 'paradise', where the police was weak and Soviet diplomats were never expelled.

I'd like to beg all who are responsible for the security of the West: be human. Do expel Soviet spies occasionally. By expelling one you enable others to reduce their frantic activity. A spy is a human being. He bears on his shoulders the immense pressure of the gigantic GRU establishment, and he has no excuse for any lapses. He needs one, so be human.

Who should be expelled first? The answer is obvious: the resident. The expulsion of the resident is equivalent to clearing the King off the chess-board: it spells checkmate to the 'resindentura', no matter how aggressive and successful it is. Usually the local police know who he is. He is easy to identify. He has already served abroad for twelve to fifteen years, he has been very active and, judging by the signs, successful. Now here he is serving abroad again, in a senior diplomatic post, and hardly ever leaving the embassy, but sitting there motionless, like a spider. Clearly it is against him that all forces must be mobilised. This is not easy. He breaks no laws, does not speed up and down the motorways day and night, carries no stolen secrets in his car. But he is more dangerous than all his officers put together.

There is a deep-seated and erroneous belief that known residents should not be allowed into the country. Sometimes they aren't, sometimes they are simply not granted entry visas. This is a mistake. I will try to explain, using my own resident as an example. He was a man of unflinching will and powerful intellect, a true ace of

spies: careful, perfidious, calculating and fearless. He was promoted to major-general at the age of thirty-six, and he had a brilliant career in front of him in the upper echelons of the GRU. But all he wanted was to be a resident, and as a result he remained a major-general. Without any doubt the Security Services in the West knew him well. Prior to one of his postings abroad the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked for a Belgian visa for him. It was refused. They asked for a French one — again refused. Then a West German one — refused again. Finally a small country with a soft, friendly government agreed to grant him entry. The GRU gave the resident his final briefing, which of course included the names and addresses of the members of the network run by the 'residentura'. As soon as he arrived in the country he started extending the network speedily and vigorously, until it was working successfully against the USA, against Belgium, against France, against all the countries which had refused him entry. In other words, barring a resident from a country does not mean rendering his network ineffective (see Appendix C).

Now imagine another set of circumstances. Supposing the first country approached, in this case Belgium, had issued the visa. The resident would be briefed, let into all the 'residentura' secrets, and would arrive in the country. However if, three to four months later, Belgium found some reason or other to expel him, the results of this would be threefold:

1. The resident will have had time to disrupt the existing system of work in the residency but not to build up a new system.

2. Having to leave the country suddenly, the resident will leave his army without a commanding officer. Time will be needed for the successor's visa application and more time to brief the new resident. In the interim the residency will remain inactive.

3. The experienced resident, on returning to Moscow, will be completely neutralised. For the following three to four years, visa applications cannot be sent for him either to France or West Germany or any other country that Belgium will have notified as an ally.

One experienced, authoritative, demanding and merciless resident serving in a neutral country with ten officers under his command can sometimes harm the West more than two hundred very active GRU officers working in the USA, Great Britain, West Germany or France. This is not only a matter of my opinion, it is also the opinion held by Moscow Centre, and it was the opinion held by my first resident, who taught me unforgettable lessons in concentration on target, persistence and mad risk. I am sincerely sorry that he has stayed the other side of the barricade....

How should one go about the business of expulsion? The short answer is: as noisily as possible. To expel a Soviet spy is of course a victory. But to expel him noisily means that you are making as much capital out of the victory as you can. The silent expulsion of a Soviet spy is an action directed against one man. The noisy expulsion is a slap in the face for the GRU, for the KGB; it is an action directed against all their spies, against thousands of unstable people prepared to listen to the proposals of the Soviet intelligence service. Here is another example encountered during my work.

I had a reasonably good relationship with a young man who agreed to 'lose' his passport. In return he agreed to 'find' some money. This was the first step towards the morass. Further well-tried steps were planned which would have pushed him deeper in each time; once in, he would never have been able to get out. However, on the day scheduled for a meeting, an insignificant local paper published an item stating that fifty per cent of the Soviet Embassy staff were spies. So at our meeting, instead of losing the money I had with me and finding his passport, I had to spend the time proving to him that the news item was a lie. And it really was a barefaced lie, as at that time not fifty but eighty per cent of the Embassy staff were spies. I managed to convince the young man. We remained good friends ... but nothing more. He did not

take the crucial step. Should you, young man, be reading my book, my greetings to you. I am glad for your sake, in spite of the fact that at the time I felt my failure deeply. But what can a poor GRU spy do in a situation when the powerful free Western press publishes such items at the least suitable moment?

Finally the question arises as to how many Soviet spies should be expelled. The only answer is: all. What do you need them for? Why keep them in your country? They are professionals specially selected and trained to destroy your country. If you have the evidence to prove that they are spies — expel them. Sometimes the theory is put forward that it is better to unearth a spy and keep him under surveillance than to expel him, as then a new one will be sent in and we will not know whom to keep under surveillance. That is correct. But every expelled spy represents a nightmare to the new ones, who fear deeply being appointed as replacements. Secondly, intelligence experience is much more valuable than any amount of education, and one experienced spy is a hundred times more dangerous than a young, green one. The more inexperienced spies you have in your country the more mistakes will be made, the easier it will be to watch them.

But if we expel people, runs the argument, the Soviet Union will retaliate and expel our innocent diplomats from Moscow. That is so. But to that there is an antidote — you must expel large groups of diplomats simultaneously. Look at these statistics: Holland expelled one — the Soviet Union's reply : two. Turkey expelled one — the reply : two. But if you increase the number to five the Soviet reply will be five or fewer. Canada expelled thirteen — the reply : two. France expelled forty-seven — the reply: nil.

Great Britain simultaneously expelled 105 (the entire staff of the GRU and KGB residencies). There was no comeback. If you take similar action against Soviet spies I guarantee that your diplomats in Moscow will be safe. I guarantee that your diplomats will be greatly respected, and that the Soviet leadership will look for opportunities to improve its relations with you. The Soviet leadership understands and acknowledges strength. But only strength and nothing else. The Soviet Union can respect the sovereignty of any country, no matter how small it looks on the map. But the Soviet Union respects the sovereignty only of those nations who respect their own sovereignty and defend it.

For GRU Officers Only

I was condemned to death by the Military College of the Supreme Court according to article 64a. My crime — betrayal of the homeland. I still plead not guilty as charged. The betrayers of the homeland are those who are now in the Kremlin. The betrayers of the homeland are those who shot millions of the best Russian farmers. Russia has always grown wheat. Grain was its most important export. Those who have made of Russia an importer of grain -they are the betrayers who should be sentenced under article 64. On the eve of war the communist leaders shot the best marshals and generals. They were motivated not by the interests of the homeland, but by the desire to hold on to their power. They should be tried in a court of law. For the deaths of the marshals and generals, my people paid the price of tens of millions of lives. Those who are guilty of that should be tried. Those in the Kremlin who have brought my people to complete moral and physical degradation — they are the traitors. These people are driving my comrades to their deaths in Afghanistan, demanding the deaths of innocent people — they are the criminals.

If they at some future time should be judged and given their just deserts, and if, then, my country then considered me to be a traitor also for deserting it, then I am ready to take my punishment, but only after they have taken theirs.

When I was in the GRU I could see two ways to protest: either I could commit suicide; or I could escape to the West, explain my disagreement with the communists and then commit suicide. I chose the second way, which is not a whit easier than the first. It is an agonising way. If any GRU officer now finds himself in the same dilemma — to go or to stay — I advise him to think over his decision a hundred times, and then again. If he is thinking of fleeing to the West, then my advice to him is — don't do it. Article 64 will be waiting for him, as will the shameful epithet 'traitor', and an agonising death, maybe even on the frontier itself. My advice would always be — don't go. He shouldn't go until such time as he is certain why he is going. If you want an easy life -don't go. If you like long, luxurious motorcars — don't go, it is not worth it for the sake of a car. If you are attracted to Western women — don't go, theirs are really no better than ours. If you think that in the West it is good, and at home in Russia bad, then you are mistaken — ours is a beautiful country. Don't go for the sake of foreign beauties and wonders.

Only if you know there is no other way for you, if you consider your leaders as criminals, if you yourself do not wish to be a criminal — then you should go. If you are prepared to risk your life for one minute of freedom — then go. If you don't feel yourself a traitor by going — go. If, by going, you can bring nearer the moment when the communists are judged by the people of our country, if you can help your people, if you are then ready to stand before the people and await their decision on your fate — then you must go. You will dream of Mother Russia every night, but go for the sake of her future and I promise you that you will be happy.

Appendix A

Leaders of Soviet Military Intelligence

I soon realised that a history of the GRU would be a very fraught undertaking. It is clear that the very shortest history of the GRU would fill several massive tomes and could only be written after the fall of communist power. The history written in this book consists only of isolated details, only vague outlines of a continent shrouded in the mists. The picture may be made clearer by studying the destiny of those individuals who have held the highest power in Soviet military intelligence. In their destinies the whole history of the organisation is reflected.

ARALOV, Simon Ivanovich: 18.12.1880 — 22.5.1969.

He was born in Moscow to rich merchant parents and educated to follow his father's profession. In 1905 he joined the Tsar's army and served in WWI as a major in military intelligence. A participant in the October Revolution he was one of the creators of the Tcheka. In January 1918 he became chief of the Operational Department of the Moscow military district. Rapidly promoted, in October 1918 he became the first chief of military intelligence until July 1920. In 1920 he moved down to chief of intelligence, 12th Army, and then regained ground commanding intelligence of the S.W. front. After 1921 he was a deputy of the chief of military intelligence, working in Turkey, Latvia and Lithuania as undercover ambassador and later was responsible for setting up residencies in the United States, Germany and Japan. In 1937, dismissed from all posts, he was employed as a deputy director of the Literature Museum. Arrested in 1938, he spent three years under interrogation. In 1941 he was serving as a private in a penal battalion. Four years later, he was a

colonel, and when the war was over he was taken back into the GRU. Then, arrested in 1946, he spent ten years in a concentration camp. On his liberation he was immediately appointed deputy to the chief of the GRU. In 1957 he was again dismissed in the Zhukov/ Shtemyenko purge, but lived quietly until his death.

STIGGA, Oskar Ansovich: 1894 — 29.7.38.

Born in Latvia, he served in WWI and became a communist after the Revolution, and a leader of the Red Latvian Riflemen. He engaged in suppressing counterrevolutionaries in Moscow and became a private bodyguard of Lenin. In October 1918 he was a deputy of the chief of military intelligence and immediately moved as an illegal into Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. In 1919 he became chief of intelligence of the Western front, and in August 1920 became chief of military intelligence. Reduced to deputy status after 1922, he travelled extensively as an illegal to create new networks until his recall to Moscow in 1938, when he was shot.

NIKONOV, A.M. (Nikonson): ? — 29.7.38.

It remains uncertain whether this was his real name or simply a party pseudonym like Lenin, Stalin, Trotski, Zinoviev and others. His date of birth is unknown. He was chief of military intelligence after Stigga, but it is not known whether Berzin took over from him or from another, so far unidentified, chief of military intelligence. He too was executed in the great terror of 1938.

2nd Grade Army Commissar BERZIN, Yan Karlovich (real name Kyuzis Peteris): 13.11.1889 — 29.7.38.

Born in Latvia, Berzin joined the Social-Democratic Party in 1904. He was conscripted into the army in the First World War but deserted and went underground. He took part in the October Revolution and afterwards he worked in the central apparatus of the NKVD and in the NKVD in Latvia. One of the main organisers of the 'Red Terror', he initiated the hostages system. He was also a fervent supporter of the establishment of a communist dictatorship in Latvia and one of the organisers and leaders of the Latvian Red Army (subsequently the 15th Army). He was head of a special department of this army and played a part in the suppression of the Russian sailors' mutiny at Kronstadt. He particularly distinguished himself in the course of the pursuit and liquidation of captured sailors. >From April 1921 he was Deputy Head of Intelligence Directorate (GRU) but, from his first days in military intelligence, he was, de facto, its head. With effect from March 1924 he became its head legally as well. He was one of the most talented, industrious and successful heads of intelligence, the creator of the most powerful and successful intelligence organisations in existence anywhere. He personally recruited and ran the most outstanding intelligence officers — Yakov Mrachkovski (Gorev), Moshe Milstein (Mikhail M), Ruth and Rolf Werner, Richard Sorge, Lev Manevich, Sandor Rado, Karl Ramm, Aino Kuusinen, Ignati Reis and the most eminent intelligence officer of the 20th century, Konstantin Efremov. In 1936 Berzin transferred the Soviet military intelligence command post from Moscow to Madrid, where he carried out his most notable recruitments while he was working under cover, officially designated as chief military adviser to the Republican Government. In order to sustain this cover story his deputies Uritski and Unshlikht carried out his duties in Moscow. On returning from Spain he continued to lead military intelligence. On 13 May 1938 he was arrested and on 29 July he was shot.

UNSHLIKHT, Iosif Stanislavovich: 19.12.1879 — 29.7.1938. An hereditary Polish nobleman and an active member of the Polish (left-wing) Social- Democratic Party, he was one of the leaders of the October Revolution. Immediately after the revolution he became a member of the NKVD college. He began the policy of state terror before Dzerzhinsky, and at one time he was considered by Soviet historians as the 'first founder of the Tcheka' at the same time as Dzerzhinsky was considered the 'chief

founder of the Tcheka'. A fervent supporter of the establishment of communism in Poland, in 1920 he was a member of the 'Polish Revolutionary Government'. From 1921-23 he was deputy chairman of the All-Russian Tcheka and one of the fathers of the 'Red Terror'. From 1923 he was deputy head of the registration directorate (GRU). In the interests of cover he constantly filled responsible posts in the Soviet Government and the Red Army. He travelled abroad several times with false documents to organise illegal work in Poland, Lithuania and Germany. In 1935-36 during Berzin's absence he carried out the duties of chief of the GRU although he remained in fact only deputy to Berzin. He was shot with Berzin in the cellar of the 'Hotel Metropole' in Moscow.

Corps Commander URITSKI, Solomon Petrovich: 1895-1937 was chief of the GRU during Berzin's absence. He was shot in the first wave of the Terror.

Commissar-General of State Security EZHOV, Nikolai Ivanovich: 1895 — 1940. A petty official who only joined the Bolsheviks when it became clear that they had won, he occupied insignificant party posts in the provinces, but from 1927 Ezhov was in Stalin's personal secretariat. In 1930 he was in charge of the Central Committee Personnel Department and in 1935 Party Secretary, controller of NKVD work. In 1936 he became Peoples' Commissar for Internal Affairs and Commissar-General for State Security. In 1937-38 there began under his leadership the 'great purge' which started as a purge of the NKVD and was then extended to the army, the party and the entire country. On 29 July 1938 there was a repeat purge of the GRU and, having liquidated the whole of the leadership and the operational staff, he took over its control, thus establishing a monopoly of secret activities in the state. From this moment on it would be impossible for the activities of the GRU and NKVD to be subject to reciprocal checking. However, the monopoly alarmed Stalin and 29 July saw the beginning of Ezhov's downfall. In October he was removed from his post. He was arrested in January 1939 and liquidated after atrocious torture. According to unconfirmed data, he was buried alive at the NKVD sanatorium at Sukhanovo.

One of the bloodiest careers in the history of mankind. Ezhov was the shortest serving Chief of the GRU and suffered the most painful death. The date of his death has not been established with certainty; there are grounds for thinking it could have been on 4 June 1940. There are also grounds for believing that Ivan Serov, a future chief of the GRU, played a personal part in Ezhov's death.

Lieut-General of Aviation PROSKUROV, Ivan Iosifovich: ? — 5.7.1940. An outstanding Soviet intelligence officer and fighter pilot, he combined both these professions simultaneously. In 1937-38 he served as a Soviet Military Adviser in Spain. He took part in air battles and shot down several enemy aircraft. At the same time he carried out a series of first-class recruitments amongst internationalists of many countries and assured a regular flow of military and military-technical intelligence. On his return from Spain he became chief of the GRU, a post he occupied from the end of 1938 to July 1940. He openly came out against the pact with Hitler. On the 4 July 1940 he was arrested, and the following day shot without trial.

Marshal of the Soviet Union GOLIKOV, Filipp Ivanovich: 16.7.1900 — 29.6.1980. He entered the Red Army as a volunteer in 1918 and took an active part in the suppression of anti-communist peasant riots on the staff of the 3rd Army Special Punitive Brigades. After the civil war he commanded a regiment, brigade, division and corps. In September 1939 he fought in Poland as commander of the 6th Army. In 1940 he became the chief of the GRU. After Hitler's invasion and the loss of contact with the most important agent network he transferred the GRU command point from Moscow to London under the guise of the Soviet military mission. In October 1941 he returned to the USSR. He commanded an army, then a front. From April 1943 he was deputy to Stalin for Red Army cadres, and, at the same time, from 1944 directed

operations against the Russian Liberation Army and the search for, and liquidation of, the leaders and those taking part in the Russian anti-communist opposition. Golikov de facto directed the forcible repatriation and destruction of more than a million people who did not want to return to the USSR. Golikov directed the post-war purge of the Army. When it was over he himself was removed from all his posts. He spent two years in prison, but by 1950 he was commanding another army and, from 1956, he was Academy Chief. >From 1958 he was head of the Chief Political Directorate of the Soviet Army and, simultaneously, Director of a Party Central Committee Department. Golikov agreed to be Army Controller on the side of the Party. In 1961 he was made Marshal of the Soviet Union. In May 1962 he was removed from office without much rumpus or scandal, however. Golikov may be said to have had the most distinguished career in the whole Soviet Army.

>From July 1941 to July 1942 Aleksei Pavlovich PANFILOV was Chief of the GRU. He was shot in 1942. In 1942-43 the GRU leadership was held by Ivan Ivanovich ILICHEV. He was also shot.

Colonel-General KUZNETSOV, Fedor Fedotovitch: 6.2.1904 — 1979. . A country boy who came to Moscow and became a factory worker, he quickly assessed the situation, joined the Party and embarked on an meteoric career. By 1937 he was 1st Secretary of the Proletarski district of Moscow, and in the heat of the great purge he showed exceptional cruelty. In 1938 he was called up into the Army and appointed deputy head of the Chief Political Directorate. He was an active participant in the army purge which included the GRU, and from 1943 he was chief of the GRU. On his appointment Stalin asked him whether he could be as good an intelligence officer as he had been earlier Party Controller of the Army. Kuznetsov's reply—'Is there any great difference?'—has become proverbial. Kuznetsov at work demonstrated that there was no great difference between the cruel, bloody struggle within the party and intelligence work. He was one of the cruellest but also one of the most successful chiefs of the GRU. In 1943 he received the plans of operation 'Citadel' (the German attack near Kursk) before General-Field Marshal E. von Manstein, whose duty it was to implement those plans. Kuznetsov had a special role to play in the organisation and carrying out of the great powers' conference in Teheran and, as a reward for his success in this, received the rank of Colonel-General. In 1945 he played an active part in the preparations and implementation of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences and also personally directed operations to steal American atomic technology.

In 1948, at the height of the post-war purges Stalin appointed Kuznetsov supreme Party Controller of the Army — Head of the Chief Political Directorate. He held this post right up to the time of Stalin's death, mercilessly purging the Soviet Army of dissidents. After Stalin's death a slow decline set in, first to the post of Head of the Chief Personnel Directorate at the Ministry of Defence, then Academy Head and, finally, Head of the Political Directorate of the Northern Group of Forces. He retired in 1969.

General of the Army SHTEMYENKO, Sergei Matveevich: 7.2.1907 — 23.4.1976. Shtemyenko joined the Red Army as a volunteer. He completed military training and two academy courses, and from 1940 was on the General Staff. His rise was swift. In 1943 he was head of the Operations Directorate of the General Staff and one of the principal Soviet military planners and the closest to Stalin. He accompanied Stalin to the Teheran conference. He became chief of the GRU from April 1946, General of the Army and Chief of the General Staff from November 1948. In June 1952, at the time of the squabble between Stalin and the Politburo he came out on Stalin's side and was, by Politburo decree, stripped of all his posts, demoted to Lieut-General and despatched to command the Volga military district staff. In 1956, at Marshal Zhukov's demand, he was returned to Moscow, reinstated in his rank of General of the Army

and re-appointed chief of the GRU. In October 1957 during the conspiracy against Zhukov, he came out on Zhukov's side. Once again he was stripped of his offices, demoted to Lieut-General and sent off to command a military district staff. In June 1962 he was Chief of Staff for Land Forces. In 1968 his rank of General of the Army was restored and he was appointed First Deputy Chief of the General Staff — Chief of Staff of the Warsaw Pact. He was still in favour when he died.

Shtemyenko's career was feverish as well as resilient. He was put forward three times for the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union, the first time at the age of forty-one, but he never received the honour. He is considered to have been the most energetic, erudite and merciless of all GRU chiefs.

General of the Army KURASOV, Vladimir Vasilievich: 7.7.1897 — 29.11.73. A Russian Army officer who went over to the side of the communists after the revolution. He served on various staffs, and from 1940 was deputy head of the General Staff Operations Directorate. During the war he was Chief of Staff of the 4th Shock Army, and later a front. After the war he was Commander-in-Chief of the Central group of forces in Austria. Promoted General of the Army, he was made chief of the GRU in February 1949. In the same year he was removed from this office and appointed Chief of the General Staff Academy. From 1956-61 he was Deputy Chief of the General Staff. His career ran smoothly. It has been said that, having accepted the GRU post and learning of the fate of all his predecessors Kurasov, on a specious pretext, declined the office and transferred to a less hazardous post. This story is corroborated by several independent sources

Marshal of the Soviet Union ZAKHAROV, Matvei Vasilievich: 5.8.1898 — 31.1.1972.

Zakharov was in Petrograd in the First World War and avoided being conscripted into the Army. He came out actively against the war, joined the Red Guard in April 1917 and stormed the Winter Palace. He then took part in the suppression of anti-communist manifestations and held unimportant posts in the Red Army. By 1936 he had worked himself up to the command of a regiment. The great purge opened up many vacancies, and in July 1937 Zakharov was Chief of Staff of the Leningrad Military District, and, from May 1938, Deputy Chief of the General Staff. During the war he was Chief of Staff of the 9th Army and later front, and, after the war, Head of the General Staff Academy. He became chief of the GRU in January 1949. In June 1952 a fierce struggle broke out about convening the 19th Party Congress. The Politburo insisted, Stalin objected. The Chief of the General Staff Shtemyenko, and the Chief of the GRU Zakharov, supported Stalin and were dismissed from their posts. After Stalin's death Zakharov's fall continued, but in May 1953 he was appointed Commander of the Leningrad Military District and was able to hold on to this post. In October 1957 a struggle broke out between the Politburo and Marshal Zhukov. Zakharov was fully on the side of the Politburo and for this he was immediately appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany. In 1959 he was made Marshal of the Soviet Union, and Chief of the General Staff in 1960. In 1963 he was dismissed. He took an active part in the conspiracy against Khrushchev and, after the successful coup d'etat was re-appointed Chief of the General Staff where he served up to September 1971—practically up to the time of his death.

Colonel-General SHALIN, Mikhail Alekseevich was chief of the GRU from 1951-56 and from November 1957 to December 1958.

General of the Army SEROV, Ivan Alekseevich.

An officer of military intelligence, at the time of the purges of the GRU he managed not only to survive but also to transfer to work in the NKVD. On 12 June 1937 he appeared in the capacity of executioner of Marshal Tukhachevski and other leading figures of the Red Army. Amongst all the protagonists of the terror he distinguished himself as the most fervent exponent of 'scenes on a massive scale'. He took part in

the pursuit and liquidation of the inhabitants of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1940 and in 1944-47. Data exists as to his personal involvement in the murder of the Polish officers in Katyn. During the war Serov was one of the leaders of Smersh, and in August 1946 he personally took part in the execution of the command of the Russian Liberation Army under Lieut-General Vlasov. Subsequently he betrayed his leaders in Smersh and the NKGB, going over in time to the camp of the victorious groups. He deserted Abakumov's group for that of Beria and betrayed him (as did General Ivashutin — the present GRU leader). In 1953 he was deputy chief of the GRU and one of the conspirators against Beria. After the fall of Beria, Serov became Chairman of the KGB. Together with Ambassador Andropov he seized the leaders of the Hungarian revolution by deceit and took part in their torture and execution. In December 1958 Serov became chief of the GRU. As an ex-KGB and Smersh officer he had many enemies in the GRU. Under Serov's leadership, corruption in GRU attained unbelievable proportions. In 1962 he was dismissed and quietly liquidated.

Serov's was the dirtiest career in the history of the GRU. He displayed a high degree of personal sadism. The years when Serov was chief of the GRU were also the most unproductive in its history. It was the only period when GRU officers voluntarily made contact with Western services and gave them much more valuable information than they took from them.

General of the Army IVASHUTIN, Peter Ivanovitch: 5.9.1909 –

A volunteer in the punitive formations of the Special Purpose Units, Ivashutin came into Army counter-intelligence from 1931. During the war he held leading posts in Smersh. Even at this time Ivashutin had powerful enemies in the NKGB. In 1944-45 he was chief of Smersh on the 3rd Ukrainian Front and in that capacity waged a ferocious struggle against the Ukrainian insurgent army and played an active role in the establishment of communist order in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Hungary. It was at this time that he first met Brezhnev, and in all subsequent activities the two men always supported each other. At the end of the war Ivashutin took part in the forcible repatriation of Soviet citizens who did not want to return to the Soviet Union. He also played a special part in the liquidation of soldiers and officers of the Russian Liberation Army. After the disbandment of Smersh he managed to outlive its other leaders by a timely transfer out of the Abakumov faction into that of Beria. At Beria's downfall he went over to the Serov faction and was appointed head of the KGB 3rd Chief Directorate. He then took part in the arrest and liquidation of Serov. On Brezhnev's recommendation in 1963, Ivashutin was appointed chief of the GRU. In this position he had a number of very serious confrontations with the KGB and personally with Andropov. However, Ivashutin defended the interests of the Army with more vigour than any of his predecessors and, therefore, in spite of his past ties with the KGB, enjoyed unlimited support from the first deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers, the chairman of the Military Industrial Complex Smirnov as well as Marshals Ustinov and Ogarkov. After Andropov's coming to power Ivashutin held on to his post in view of powerful support within the Army.

Appendix B

The GRU High Command and Leading GRU Officers

The following list gives names of the most prominent senior GRU officers with their official titles where possible. This is followed by an alphabetical list of some of the known operational officers working under cover around the world.

Army General IVASHUTIN, Petr Ivanovich: deputy chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces. Head of GRU. Official pseudonyms 'Tovarishch Mikhailov', 'Dyadya Petya'. The first pseudonym is also used in connection with all military intelligence.

Col-General LEMZENKO, Kir Gavrilovich: GRU representative in the Party Central Committee; 'Papa Rimski'.

Col-General PAVLOV, Aleksandr Grigorevich: first deputy chief of GRU.

Admiral BEKRENEV: deputy chief of GRU.

Col-General ZOTOV, Arkady Vasilievich: deputy chief of GRU, head of Information.

Col-General MESHCHERYAKOV, V.V.: deputy chief of GRU, head of the Military Diplomatic Academy.

Col-General IZOTOV, S.I.: head of GRU Personnel Directorate.

Col-General SIDOROV, Y.I.

Lieutenant-Generals and Vice Admirals (approximately 20)

Lt-General DOLIN, G.I.: head of GRU Political Department.

Lt-General GURENKO, Vyacheslav Tikhonovich: head of the Illegals Training Centre.

Lt-General Aviation SHATALOV, Vladimir Aleksandrovich: GRU representative at the Cosmonaut Training Centre.

Lt-General KOLODYAZHNY, Boris Gavrilovich: GRU deputy chief for Internal Security.

Lt-General MILSTEIN, Moshe: GRU deputy chief for Disinformation. A former illegal and author of top secret manual Honourable Service. Codename 'Tovarishch M', 'Mikhail M.'.

Lt-General KOSTIN P.T.: chief of GRU 3rd (?) Directorate.

Lt-General Engineer PALIY A.: chief of GRU 6th Directorate.

Lt-General GONTAR: chief of GRU 7th Directorate.

Lt-General DRACHEV I.M.

Lt-General KOZLOV M.: Chief of GRU 11th (?) Directorate.

Lt-General BERKUTOV, S.: Information Service.

Vice Admiral ROZHKO, Gennadi Aleksandrovich.

Major-Generals and Rear Admirals (approximately 125)

Maj-General Aviation CHIZHOV, Mikhail Terentyevich.

Rear Admiral KALININ, Valeri Petrovich.

Maj-General Aviation KUCHUMOV, Aleksandr Mikhailovich.

Maj-General SHITOV.

Rear Admiral KLYUZOV, Serafim Timofeevich.

Maj-General BARANOV, Aleksandr Vasilievich.

Maj-General LYALIN, Mikhail Ammosovich.

Maj-General BEPPAEV S.U.: Chief of Intelligence of Group Soviet Forces in Germany.

Maj-General Artillery LYUBIMOV, Viktor Andreevich.

Maj-General GONCHAROV, Gennadi Grigorevich.

Maj-General KHOMYAKOV, Aleksandr Sergeevich.

Rear Admiral KOZLOV, Andrei Nikolaevich.

Maj-General MIKHAILOV, Boris Nikolaevich.

Maj-General ZIMIN, Valentin Yakovlevich.

Maj-General ANDRYANOV, V.: Spetsnaz.

Maj-General Aviation MIKRYUKOV, L.

Maj-General GLAZUNOV, N.

Rear Admiral SMIRNOV, M.

Leading GRU Officers

ABRAMOV, Vladimir Mikhailovich

BAYLIN, Vladimir Ivanovich

BELOUSOV, Mikolai Mikhailovich

BELOUSOV, Konstantin Nikolaevich

BLINOV, Boris Afanasyevich

BARCHUGOV

BORISOV, Gennadi Alekseevich

BORODIN, Viktor Mikhailovich

BUDENNY

BOROVINSKI, Petr Fedorovich

BUBNOV, Nikolai Ivanovich

BUTAKOV, Ilya Petrovich

DEMIN, Mikhail Alekseevich

DENISOV

DORONKIN, Kirill Sergeevich

EGOROV, Anatoli Egorovich

ERMAKOV, Aleksandr Ivanovich

ERSHOV, Yuri Alekseevich

EVDOKIMOV, Sergei Vasilevich

FEKLENKO, Vladimir Nikolaevich

FILATOV, Anatoli

FILIPPOV, Anatoli Vasilevich

GENERALOV, Vsevolod Nikolaevich

GERASIMOV

KAPALKIN, Sergei Vasilevich

KASHEVAROV, Evgeni Mikhailovich

KOZYPITSKI, Gleb Sergeevich

LOVCHIKOV, Vasili Dmitrievich

LAVROV, Valeri Alekseevich

LEMEKHOV, Dmitri Aleksandrovich

LOBANOV, Vitali Ilich

LOGINOV, Igor Konstantinovich

MOROZOV, Ivan Yakovlevich

MYAKISHEV, Aleksei Nikolaevich

NEDOZOROV, Valentin Viktorovich

NOSKOV, Nikolai Stepanovich

OSIPOV, Oleg Aleksandrovich

PAVLENKO, Yuri Kuzmich

PETROV, Nikolai Kirillovich

PIVOBAROV, Oleg Ivanovich

POLYAKOV, Boris Alekseevich

POPOV, Gennadi Fedorovich

POTAPENKO, Leonid Terentyevich

POTSELUEV, Evgeni Aleksandrovich

PUTILIN, Mikhail Semenovich

RATNIKOV, Valentin Mikhailovich

RADIONOV, Aleksandr Sergeevich

ROMANOV, Anatoli Aleksandrovich

RUBANOV, Aleksandr Nikolaevich

SALEKHOV, Yuri Nikolaevich

SAVIN, Viktor Grigorevich
SELUNSKI, Valentin Ivanovich
SEMENOV, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich
SERGEEV, Yuri Pavlovich
SHEPELEV, Viktor Petrovich
SHIPOV, Vladilen Nikolaevich
SOKOLOV, Viktor Aleksandrovich
STRELBITSKI, Vladimir Vasilevich
STUDENIKIN, Ivan Yakovlevich
SUKHAREV, Georgi Nikolaevich
SUVOROV, Georgi Borisovich
UMNOV, Valentin Aleksandrovich
VETROV, Yuri Pavlovich
VILKOV, Boris Nikolaevich
VINOGRADOV, Feliks Vasilevich
VOLNOV, Vladimir Grigorevich
VOLOKITIN, Vladimir Ivanovich
VOTRIN, Sergei Ivanovich
VYBORNOV, Ivan Yakovlevich
YAKUSHEV, Ivan Ivanovich
YURASOV, Viktor Vladimirovich
ZHELANNOV, Vladimir Mikhailovich
ZHEREBTSON, Aleksandr Vasilevich
ZHERNOV, Leonid Andreevich
ZHURAVLEV, Ivan Mikhailovich
ZOTOV, Viktor Nikolaevich

Appendix C

Some Case Histories of GRU Activities

Rather than sprinkling the text with examples I have put together a representative sample of GRU officers uncovered in the course of operations abroad, as reported in the press. The number of GRU officers caught and expelled and the nature of their activities is indicative of the power and scale of the GRU.

Canada and the United States

In June 1980 the Canadians announced that they had requested the withdrawal of three Soviet officials from the Embassy, Captain Igor A. Bardeev, Colonel E.I. Aleksanjan and the chauffeur Sokolov. The case involved an unnamed individual employed in a sensitive position in the USA, who had been in contact with the Soviet Embassy and been given the task of obtaining information. Soviet officials had maintained clandestine contact with the American citizen over a period of some months.

France

In October 1979 the Naval and Air Attaché of the Soviet Embassy in France, Vladimir Kulik, was expelled from the country. He was an officer of the GRU working in French military circles and had been in contact with firms specialising in military supplies. In 1979, at a reception in another embassy, he had met by chance a young Frenchman employed in the armaments department of an important organisation who was carrying out studies on behalf of the Ministry of Defence. Kulik sought to maintain contact with the Frenchman, and in due course offered him a large sum of money for

documents from his place of work. He also sought to find out details about other staff at the organisation where the Frenchman worked. Kulik was arrested at the moment when he was about to receive from the Frenchman a document about a French weapon.

In February 1980 the Soviet Consul and No. 2 in Marseilles was withdrawn. He had been detained by the French authorities between Toulon and Marseilles with plans of the Mirage 2000 fighter aircraft in his briefcase. They had just been handed to him by an agent.

Travkov had arrived in 1977. The area of Marseilles and the Bouches du Rhone contains many installations and objects of defence interest. Travkov was officially concerned with 'scientific subjects connected with the port and airport', and these interests enabled him to meet people involved in the aeronautical field and to visit firms and installations. Travkov obtained copies of files on staff working on defence contracts and used the details thus revealed to build up a network of informers. Four Frenchmen were taken into custody at the time of Travkov's arrest. Travkov had also been interested in the twin-jet Mirage 4000 which used the same engine as the 2000.

The Soviet Press Attache declared the French action a 'provocation by the police' but the documents were, of course, genuine. A few days later Frolov, himself a KGB officer, was required to leave France too. He had been in Marseilles for two years and had earlier had a posting to Paris. His job, like Travkov's, had given him opportunities to meet all sorts of people and he had made the most of it. Both Travkov and Frolov were personable, charming individuals who made many friends.

Great Britain

Anatoliy Pavlovich Zotov, the Soviet Naval Attache in London, was expelled in December 1982 after trying to set up a network of agents to gather information about weapons systems and electronic hardware used by the Royal Navy during the Falklands campaign. His interests had also extended to the Royal Navy's nuclear submarines.

Japan

A retired Japanese major-general, Yukihiisa Miyanaga was arrested in Tokyo in January 1980. He was a GRU agent whose case officer at the time of his arrest was Colonel Yuriy N. Koslov, Military and Air Attache at the Soviet Embassy. Miyanaga had been recruited as an agent in 1974 by one of Koslov's predecessors. He was equipped with and instructed in various means of clandestine communication, including particular ciphers for use with radio. Miyanaga and two other officers of the Japanese Ground Self-Defence Force were subsequently sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for passing military secrets to the GRU.

Norway

Valeriy Moiseevich Mesropov served in Norway as an engineer with a Russian firm in Drammen, as a representative of Stankoimport, from 1968 to 1970. Mesropov, who was not a diplomat, was arrested in 1970 on suspicion of intelligence activity and finally expelled from Norway for security reasons in September 1970.

Igor Ivanovich Zashchirinsky served in Norway from 1974 to 1977 as representative at the Soviet Trade Delegation of a number of Soviet import/export organisations. He was engaged on clandestine operations to obtain information and products of a scientific/technical nature including material classified as Top Secret. He too was declared persona non grata on 28 January 1977.

In June 1983 Lt-Colonel Zagrebnev was expelled from Norway. He was Military Attache at the Embassy in Oslo, and had visited a military area in the north of Norway, where he had attempted to bribe a Norwegian officer to hand over secret information.

Spain

Oleg Churanov, Director of Aeroflot in Madrid, was arrested in February 1980, accused of espionage for the Soviet Union. His case was part of another expulsion of six officials who had already left. It was alleged that Churanov had bought plans of certain aviation electronic equipment. The 'seller' was a member of the Spanish Secret Services who purported to be a member of a Spanish firm. Churanov was an engineer who had been Aeroflot representative in Canada before coming to Spain. He was very popular with staff and pilots at Madrid airport where he had shown interest in radio frequencies and the security regulations at the airport. He had also tried, on one occasion, to get a Spanish pilot to introduce him into the American airport at Tarrejon. The Spanish security authorities themselves claimed that Churanov was a member of the GRU.

In May 1982 the Aeroflot Director in Spain was again expelled for spying, this time with another official. Vasiliy Fedorin and Vladimir Tertishnikov were accused of trying to obtain information on the supply of US military materials to Spain and on Spanish weapons manufacturers.

Sweden

In March 1979 Stig Bergling, a Swedish police inspector and reserve officer, was arrested in Israel. He had been an agent of the GRU for some ten years. In January 1969 he had begun service with the Police Board, and from 1971-75 was given leave of absence to serve in the Defence Ministry and to do duty with the UN. Bergling had access to information about security police personnel and counter-espionage organisations; and about defence establishments and Swedish defence plans. He was equipped with radio to receive messages from the GRU, and also made use of micro-dots. He kept in touch with his case officers in a number of countries, particularly in the Middle East, having been trained in East Berlin.

Viktor Suvorov

[illegible][illegible]

1

Types of Division

The Invisible Divisions

Why is a Military District commanded by a Colonel-General in peacetime, but only by a Major-General in wartime?

The System for Evacuating the Politburo from the Kremlin

Part V: Strategy and tactics

The Axe Theory

The Strategic Offensive

«Operation Detente»

Tactics

Rear Supplies

Part VI: Equipment

What sort of weapons?

Learning from Mistakes

When will we be able to dispense with the tank?

The Flying Tank

The Most Important Weapon

Why are Anti-tank Guns not self-propelled?

The Favourite Weapon

Why do Calibres vary?

Secrets, Secrets, Secrets

How much does all this cost?

Copying Weapons

Part VII: The soldier's lot

Building Up

How to avoid being called up

If you can't, we'll teach you; if you don't want to, we'll make you

1,441 Minutes

Day after day

Why does a soldier need to read a map?

The Training of Sergeants

The Corrective System

Part VIII: The officer's path

How to control them?

How much do you drink in your spare time?

Drop in, and we'll have a chat

Who becomes a Soviet officer and why?

Higher Military Training Colleges

Duties and Military Ranks

Military Academies

Generals

Conclusion

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Foreword

The book, *Inside the Soviet Army*, is written under the name of «Viktor Suvorov.» As a defector, under sentence of death in the USSR, the author does not use his own name and has chosen instead that of one of the most famous of Russian generals. This is a book that should command wide attention, not only in the armed forces of the free world, but among the general public as well. It is an account of the structure, composition, operational method, and general outlook of the Soviet military in the context of the Communist regime in the USSR and the party's total dominion, not only over the Soviet Union, but over the client states of the Warsaw Pact as well.

The book starts with a survey of the higher military leadership and an analysis of the types of armed services, and of the organization of Soviet Army formation. An examination of the Red Army's mobilization system that follows is of particular interest. The chapters that follow on strategy and tactics and on equipment are also of high interest. The first, on operational method, emphasizes the supreme importance attached in Soviet military thinking to the offensive and the swift exploitation of success. Defensive action is hardly studied at all except as an aspect of attack. The second, on equipment, examines Soviet insistence on simplicity in design and shows how equipment of high technical complexity (the T-72 tank, for instance) is also developed in another form, radically simplified in what the author calls «the monkey model,» for swift wartime production. The last two chapters on «The Soldiers' Lot» and «The Officer's Role» will be found by many to be the most valuable and revealing of the whole book. We have here not so much a description of what the Red Army *looks* like from the outside, but what it *feels* like inside.

This book is based on the author's fifteen years of regular service in the Soviet Army, in troop command and on the staff, which included command of a motor rifle company in the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. About this he has written another book, *The Liberators*, which is a spirited account of life in the Red Army, highly informative in a painless sort of way and often very funny. There is rather less to laugh at in this book than in that one: Viktor Suvorov writes here in deadly earnest.

There is no doubt at all of the author's right to claim unquestioned authority on matters which he, as a junior officer, could be expected to know about at firsthand and in great detail. Nevertheless, not everyone would agree with everything he has to say. Though I know him personally rather well, Viktor Suvorov is aware that I cannot myself go all the way with him in some of his arguments and I am sometimes bound to wonder whether he is always interpreting the evidence correctly.

Having said this, however, I hasten to add something that seems to be of overriding importance. The value of this book, which in my view is high, derives as much from its apparent weaknesses as from its clearly evident strengths--and perhaps even more. The author is a young, highly trained professional officer with very considerable troop service behind him as well as staff training. He went through the Frunze Military Academy (to which almost all the Red Army's elite officers are sent) and was thereafter employed as a staff officer. He tells the reader how he, being what he is--that is to say, a product of the Soviet Army and the society it serves--judges the military machine created in the Soviet Union under Marxism-Leninism, and how he responded to it. He found that he could take no more of the inefficiency, corruption, and blatant dishonesty of a regime which claimed to represent its people, but had slaughtered millions of them to sustain its own absolute supremacy.

It would be unwise to suppose that what is found in this book is peculiar only to the visions and opinions of one young officer who might not necessarily be typical of the group as a whole. It might be sensible to suppose that if this is the way the scene has been observed, analyzed, and reported on by one Red Army officer of his generation,

there is a high probability that others, and probably very many others, would see things in much the same way. Where he may seem to some readers to get it wrong, both in his conclusion about his own army and his opinions on military matters in the Western world, he is almost certainly representing views very widely held in his own service. Thus, it is just as important to take note of points upon which the reader may think the author is mistaken as it is to profit from his observation on those parts of the scene which he is almost uniquely fitted to judge.

This book should not, therefore, be regarded as no more than an argument deployed in a debate, to be judged on whether the argument is thought to be wrong or right. Its high importance lies far more in the disclosure of what Soviet officers are taught and how they think. This window opened into the armed forces of the Soviet Union is, up to the present time, unique of its kind, as far as I am aware. Every serving officer in the Western world should read it, whether he agrees with what he reads or not, and particularly if he does not. All politicians should read it, and so should any member of the public who takes seriously the threat of a third world war and wonders about the makeup and outlook of the armed forces in the free world's main adversary.

General Sir John Hackett

Part One

The Higher Military Leadership

Why did the Soviet Tanks not threaten Romania?

1

It looked as though the soldiers had laid a very large, very heavy carpet at the bottom of the wooded ravine. A group of us, infantry and tank officers, looked at their work from a slope high above them with astonishment, exchanging wild ideas about the function of the dappled, greyish-green carpet, which gleamed dully in the sun.

'It's a container for diesel fuel,' said the commander of a reconnaissance party confidently, putting an end to the argument.

He was right. When the heavy sheeting, as large as the hull of an airship, was finally unfolded, a number of grubby-looking soldiers laid a network of field pipelines through our battalion position.

All night long they poured liquid fuel into the container. Lazily and unwillingly it became fatter, crushing bushes and young fir trees under its tremendous weight. Towards morning the container began to look like a very long, flat, broad hot water bottle, made for some giant child. The resilient surface was carefully draped with camouflage nets. Sappers hung spirals of barbed wire around the ravine and a headquarters company set up field picquets to cover the approaches.

In a neighbouring ravine the filling of another equally large fuel container was in progress. Beyond a stream, in a depression, worn-out reservists were slowly spreading out a second huge canopy. Struggling through bogs and clearings, covered from head to foot in mud, the soldiers pulled and heaved at an endless web of field pipelines. Their faces were black, like photographs negatives, and this made their teeth seem unnaturally white when they showed them, in their enjoyment of obscenities so monstrous that they made their young reserve officer blush.

This whole affair was described, briefly, as «Rear Units Exercise». But we could see what was going on with our own eyes and we realised that this was more than an exercise. It was all too serious. On too large a scale. Too unusual. Too risky. Was it likely that they would amass such enormous stocks of tank fuel and ammunition, or build thousands of underground command posts communications centres, depots and stores on the very borders of the country just for an exercise?

The stifling summer of 1968 had begun. Everyone realised quite clearly that the sultriness and tension in the air could suddenly turn into a summer storm. We could only guess when and where this would happen. It was quite clear that our forces would invade Romania but whether they would also go into Czechoslovakia was a matter for speculation.

The liberation of Romania would be a joy-ride. Her maize fields suited our tanks admirably. Czechoslovakia was another matter. Forests and mountain passes are not good terrain for tanks.

The Romanian army had always been the weakest in Eastern Europe and had the oldest equipment. But in Czechoslovakia things would be more complicated. In 1968 her army was the strongest in Eastern Europe. Romania had not even a theoretical hope of help from the West, for it had no common frontier with the countries of NATO. But in Czechoslovakia, in addition to Czech tank divisions, we risked meeting American, West German, British, Belgian, Dutch and possibly French divisions. A world war might break out in Czechoslovakia but there was no such risk in Romania.

So, although preparations were being made for the liberation of Romania, we clearly would not go into Czechoslovakia. The risk was too great....

2

For some reason, though, despite all our calculations and in the face of all common sense, they did send us into Czechoslovakia. Never mind, we reassured ourselves--we'll deal with Dubcek and then we'll get around to Ceaucescu. First of all we'll make the Czech people happy and then it'll be the turn of the Romanians.

But for some reason it never was....

Elementary logic suggested that it was essential to liberate Romania and to do so immediately. The reasons for acting with lightning speed were entirely convincing. Ceaucescu had denounced our valiant performance in Czechoslovakia as aggression. Then Romania announced that henceforth no exercises by Warsaw Pact countries might be held on her territory. Next she declared that she was a neutral country and that in the event of a war in Europe she would decide for herself whether to enter the war or not and if so on which side. After this she vetoed a proposal for the construction of a railway line which was to have crossed her territory in order to link the Soviet Union and Bulgaria. Each year, too, Romania would reject suggestions by the Soviet Union that she should increase her involvement in the activities of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation.

Then there was a truly scandalous occurrence. Soviet military intelligence reported that Israel was in great need of spare parts for Soviet-built tanks, which had been captured in Sinai, and that Romania was secretly supplying these spare parts. Hearing of this, the commander of our regiment, without waiting for instructions, ordered that a start should be made with bringing equipment out of mothballing. He assumed that the last hour had struck for the stubborn Romanians. It turned out to be his last hour that had come. He was rapidly relieved of his command, the equipment was put back in storage and the regiment fell back into a deep sleep.

Things became even worse. The Romanians bought some military helicopters from France. These were of great interest to Soviet military intelligence, but our Romanian

allies would not allow our experts to examine them, even from a distance. Some of the more hawkish generals and their juniors still believed that the Soviet leadership would change their mind and that Romania would be liberated or at least given a good fright by troop movements of a scale befitting a super-power along her borders. But the majority of officers had already given Romania up as a bad job. We had got used to the idea that Romania was allowed to do anything that she liked, that she could take any liberties she pleased. The Romanians could exchange embraces with our arch-enemies the Chinese, they could hold their own opinions and they could make open criticisms of our own beloved leadership.

We began to wonder why the slightest piece of disobedience or evidence of free thinking was crushed with tanks in East Germany, in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary or inside the Soviet Union itself, but not in Romania. Why was the Soviet Union ready to risk annihilation in a nuclear holocaust in order to save far-off Cuba but not prepared to try to keep Romania under control? Why, although they had given assurances of their loyalty to the Warsaw Treaty, were the Czech leaders immediately dismissed, while the rulers of Romania were allowed to shed their yoke without complications of any sort? What made Romania an exception? Why was she forgiven for everything?

3

Many explanations are put forward for the behaviour of Soviet Communists in the international arena. The most popular is that the Soviet Union is, essentially, the old Russian Empire--and an empire must grow. A good theory. Simple and easy to understand. But it has one defect--it cannot explain the case of Romania. In fact, none of the popular theories can explain why the Soviet rulers took such radically differing approaches to the problems of independence in Czechoslovakia and in Romania. No single theory can explain both the intolerance which the Soviet leadership showed towards the gentle criticism which came from Czechoslovakia and their astonishing imperviousness to the furious abuse with which Romania showered them.

If the Soviet Union is to be regarded as an empire, it is impossible to understand why it does not try to expand south-eastwards, towards the fertile fields and vineyards of Romania. For a thousand years, possession of the Black Sea straits has been the dream of Russian princes, tsars and emperors. The road to the straits lies through Romania. Why does the Soviet Union leap into wars for Vietnam and Cambodia, risking collision with the greatest powers in the world and yet forget about Romania, which lies right under its nose?

In fact the explanation is very simple. The USSR is not Russia or the Russian Empire; it is not an empire at all. To believe that the Soviet Union conforms to established historical standards is a very dangerous simplification. Every empire has expanded in its quest for new territories, subjects and wealth. The motivating force of the Soviet Union is quite different. The Soviet Union does not need new territory. Soviet Communists have slaughtered scores of millions of their own peasants and have nationalised their land, which they are unable to develop, even if they wished to. The Soviet Union has no need of new slaves. Soviet Communists have shot sixty million of their own subjects, thus demonstrating their complete inability to rule them. They cannot rule or even effectively control those who remain alive. Soviet Communists have no need of greater wealth. They squander their own limitless resources easily and freely. They are ready to build huge dams in the deserts of Africa for next to nothing, to give away their oil at the expense of Soviet Industry, to pay lavishly, in gold, for any adventurous scheme, and to support all sorts of free-booters

and anarchists, no matter what the cost, even if this brings ruination to their own people and to the national exchequer.

Different stimuli and other driving forces are at work upon the Soviet Union in the international arena. Herein lies the fundamental difference which distinguishes it from all empires, including the old Russian version, and here too lies the main danger.

The Soviet Communist dictatorship, like any other system, seeks to preserve its own existence. To do this it is forced to stamp out any spark of dissidence which appears, either on its own territory or beyond its borders. A communist regime cannot feel secure so long as an example of another kind of life exists anywhere near it, with which its subjects can draw comparisons. It is for this reason that any form of Communism, not only the Soviet variety, is always at pains to shut itself off from the rest of the world, with a curtain, whether this is made of iron, bamboo or some other material.

The frontiers of a state which has nationalised its heavy industry and collectivised its agriculture--which has, in other words, carried out a «socialist transformation»--are always reminiscent of a concentration camp, with their barbed wire, watch-towers with searchlights and guard-dogs. No Communist state can allow its slaves free movement across its frontiers.

In the world today there are millions of refugees. All of them are in flight from Communism. If the Communists were to open their frontiers, all their slaves would flee. It is for this reason that the Democratic Republic of Kampuchea has set up millions of traps along its borders--solely to prevent anyone from attempting to leave this Communist paradise. The East German Communists are enemies of the Kampuchean regime but they, too, have installed the same sort of traps along their own borders. But neither Asian cunning nor German orderliness can prevent people from fleeing from Communism and the Communist leaders are therefore faced with the immense problem of destroying the societies which might capture the imagination of their people and beckon to them.

Marx was right: the two systems cannot co-exist. And no matter how peace-loving Communists may be, they come unfailingly to the conclusion that world revolution is inescapable. They must either annihilate capitalism or be put to death by their own people.

There are some Communist countries which are considered peace-loving--Albania, Democratic Kampuchea, Yugoslavia. But the love of peace which these countries affect is simply the product of their weakness. They are not yet strong enough to speak of world revolution, because of their internal or external problems. But regimes which can hardly be much more self-confident than these, such as Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea, quickly plunge into the heroic struggle to liberate other countries, of which they know nothing, from the yoke of capitalism.

Communist China has her own very clear belief in the inevitability of world revolution. She has shown her hand in Korea, in Vietnam, in Cambodia and in Africa. She is still weak and therefore peace-loving, as the Soviet Union was during its period of industrialisation. But China, too, faces the fundamental problem of how to keep her billion-strong population from the temptation to flee from the country. Traps along the borders, the jamming of radio broadcasts, almost complete isolation--none of these produces the desired result and when China becomes an industrial and military super-power she, too, will be forced to use more radical measures. She has never ceased to speak of world revolution.

The fact that Communists of different countries fight between themselves for the leading role in the world revolution is unimportant. What is significant is that all have the same goal: if they cease to pursue it they are, in effect, committing suicide.

`Our only salvation lies in world revolution: either we achieve it whatever the sacrifices, or we will be crushed by the petty bourgeoisie,' said Nikolay Bukharin, the most liberal and peace-loving member of Lenin's Politburo. The more radical members of the Communist forum advocated an immediate revolutionary war against bourgeois Europe. One of them, Lev Trotsky, founded the Red Army--the army of World Revolution. In 1920 this army tried to force its way across Poland to revolutionary Germany. This attempt collapsed. The world revolution has not taken place: it has been disastrously delayed but sooner or later the Communists must either bring it about or perish.

4

To the Soviet Union Romania is an opponent. An enemy. An obstinate and unruly neighbour. To all intents and purposes an ally of China and of Israel. Yet not a single Soviet subject dreams of escaping to Romania or aspires to exchange Soviet life for the Romanian version. Therefore Romania is not a dangerous enemy. Her existence does not threaten the foundations of Soviet Communism, and this is why drastic measures have never been taken against her. However, the first stirrings of democracy in Czechoslovakia represented a potentially dangerous contagion for the peoples of the Soviet Union, just as the change of regime in Hungary represented a very dangerous example for them. The Soviet leaders understood quite clearly that what happened in East Germany might also happen in Esthonia, that what happened in Czechoslovakia might happen in the Ukraine, and it was for this reason that Soviet tanks crushed Hungarian students so pitilessly beneath their tracks.

The existence of Romania, which, while it may be unruly, is nevertheless a typical Communist regime, with its cult of a supreme and infallible leader, with psychiatric prisons, with watch towers along its frontiers, presents no threat to the Soviet Union. By contrast, the existence of Turkey, where peasants cultivate their own land, is like a dangerous plague, an infection which might spread into Soviet territory. This is why the Soviet Union does so much to destabilise the Turkish regime, while doing nothing to unseat the unruly government in Romania.

For the Communists any sort of freedom is dangerous, no matter where it exists--in Sweden or in El Salvador, in Canada or in Taiwan. For Communists any degree of freedom is dangerous--whether it is complete or partial, whether it is economic, political or religious freedom. `We will not spare our forces in fighting for the victory of Communism:' these are the words of Leonid Brezhnev. `To achieve victory for Communism throughout the world, we are prepared for any sacrifice:' these are the words of Mao Tse-Tung. They also sound like the words of fellow-thinkers.... For that is what they are. Their philosophies are identical, although they belong to different branches of the same Mafia. Their philosophies must be identical, for neither can sleep soundly so long as there is, anywhere in the world, a small gleam of freedom which could serve as a guiding light for those who have been enslaved by the Communists.

5

In the past every empire has been guided by the interests of the State, of its economy, of its people or at least of its ruling class. Empires came to a halt when they saw insuperable obstacles or invincible opposition in their paths. Empires came to a halt when further growth became dangerous or economically undesirable. The Russian Empire, for example, sold Alaska for a million dollars and its colonies in California at a similarly cheap price because there was no justification for retaining these territories. Today the Soviet Communists are squandering millions of dollars each day in order to

hang on to Cuba. They cannot give it up, no matter what the cost may be, no matter what economic catastrophe may threaten them.

Cuba is the outpost of the world revolution in the western hemisphere. To give up Cuba would be to give up world revolution and that would be the equivalent of suicide for Communism. The fangs of Communism turn inwards, like those of a python. If the Communists were to set about swallowing the world, they would have to swallow it whole. The tragedy is that, if they should want to stop, this would be impossible because of their physiology. If the world should prove to be too big for it, the python would die, with gaping jaws, having buried its sharp fangs in the soft surface, but lacking the strength to withdraw them. It is not only the Soviet python which is attempting to swallow the world but the other breeds of Communism, for all are tied inescapably to pure Marxism, and thus to the theory of world revolution. The pythons may hiss and bite one another but they are all of one species.

The Soviet Army, or more accurately the Red Army, the Army of World Revolution, represents the teeth of the most dangerous but also the oldest of the pythons, which began to swallow the world by sinking its fangs into the surface and then realised just how big the world is and how dangerous for its stomach. But the python has not the strength to withdraw its fangs.

Why was the Warsaw Treaty Organisation set up later than NATO?

1

The countries of the West set up NATO in 1949 but the Warsaw Treaty Organisation was created only in 1955. For the Communists, comparison of these two dates makes excellent propaganda for consumption by hundreds of millions of gullible souls. Facts are facts--the West put together a military bloc while the Communists simply took counter-measures--and there was a long delay before they even did that. Not only that, but the Soviet Union and its allies have come forward repeatedly and persistently with proposals for breaking up military blocs both in Europe and throughout the world. The countries of the West have rejected these peace-loving proposals almost unanimously.

Let us take the sincerity of the Communists at face value. Let us assume that they do not want war. But, if that is so, the delay in establishing a military alliance of Communist states contradicts a fundamental tenet of Marxism: 'Workers of the World Unite!' is the chief rallying cry of Marxism. Why did the workers of the countries of Eastern Europe not hasten to unite in an alliance against the bourgeoisie? Whence such disrespect for Marx? How did it happen that the Warsaw Treaty Organisation was set up, not in accordance with the Communist Manifesto but solely as a reaction to steps taken by the bourgeois countries--and then so belatedly?

Strange though it may seem, there is no contradiction with pure Marxism in this case. But, in trying to understand the aims and structures of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, the interrelationships within it and the delay in its establishment (which at first sight is inexplicable), we shall not immerse ourselves in theory nor attempt to follow the intricate workings of this unwieldy bureaucratic organisation. If we study the fate of Marshal K. K. Rokossovskiy we shall come to understand, if not everything, at least the essentials.

2

Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskiy was born in 1896 in the old Russian town of Velikiye Luki. At eighteen he was called up by the Russian army. He spent the whole of the war at the front, first as a private, then as an NCO. In the very first days of the Revolution he went over to the Communists and joined the Red Army. He distinguished himself fighting against both the Russian and Polish armies. He moved rapidly upwards, ending the war in command of a regiment. After the war he commanded a brigade, then a division and then a corps.

At the time of the Great Purge the Communists tortured or shot those people who had miraculously survived until then despite past connections with the Russian government, army, police, diplomatic service, church or culture. Red Army Corps Commander Rokossovskiy found himself among the millions of victims because of his service with the Russian army.

During the investigations he underwent appalling tortures. Nine of his teeth were knocked out, three of his ribs were broken, his toes were hammered flat. He was sentenced to death and spent more than three months in the condemned cell. There is testimony, including his own, that, twice, at least, he was subjected to mock shootings, being led to the place of execution at night, and made to stand at the edge of a grave as generals on his right and left were shot, while he was 'executed' with a blank cartridge fired at the nape of his neck.

On the eve of the war between Germany and the Soviet Union Rokossovskiy was let out of gaol and given the rank of Major-General of Tank Forces and command of a mechanised corps. However, the charge resulting from his service with the Russian army was not dropped and the death sentence was not annulled. 'Take command of this mechanised corps, prisoner, and we'll see about your death sentence later....'

On the second day of the war, Rokossovskiy's 9th Mechanised Corps struck an unexpected and powerful blow against German tanks, which were breaking through in the area of Rovno and Lutsk, at a moment when the rest of the Soviet forces were retreating in panic. In a situation of confusion and disorganisation, Rokossovskiy showed calmness and courage in his defence of the Soviet regime. He managed to maintain the fighting efficiency of his corps and to make several successful counter-attacks. On the twentieth day of the war he was promoted, becoming Commander of the 16th Army, which distinguished itself both in the battle of Smolensk and, especially, in the battle for Moscow, when, for the first time in the course of the war, the German army was heavily defeated. During the battle of Stalingrad Rokossovskiy commanded the Don front, which played a decisive role in the encirclement and complete destruction of the strongest German battle group, consisting of twenty-two divisions.

During the battle for Kursk, when weather conditions put the contestants on equal terms, Rokossovskiy commanded the Central Front, which played a major part in smashing Hitler's last attempt to achieve a decisive success. Thereafter Rokossovskiy successfully commanded forces in operations in Byelorussia, East Prussia, Eastern Pomerania and, finally, in Berlin.

Stars rained upon Rokossovskiy. They fell on to his shoulder boards, on to his chest and around his neck. In 1944 he was awarded the diamond Marshal's Star and a gold star to pin on his chest. In 1945 he was awarded both the Victory order, on which sparkle no less than one hundred diamonds, and a second gold star. Stalin conferred the highest honour on Rokossovskiy by giving him command of the Victory Parade on Red Square.

But what has all this to do with the Warsaw Treaty Organisation? The fact that, immediately after the war, Stalin sent his favourite, Rokossovskiy, to Warsaw and gave him the title of Marshal of Poland to add to his existing rank as Marshal of the Soviet

Union. In Warsaw Rokossovskiy held the posts of Minister of Defence, Deputy President of the Council of Ministers and Member of the Politburo of the Polish Communist Party. Think for a moment about the full significance of this--a Marshal of the Soviet Union as deputy to the head of the Polish government!

In practice Rokossovskiy acted as military governor of Poland, senior watchdog over the Polish government and supervisor of the Polish Politburo. As all-powerful ruler of Poland, Rokossovskiy remained a favourite of Stalin's, but a favourite who was under sentence of death, a sentence which was lifted only after the death of Stalin in 1953. A favourite of this sort could have been shot at any moment. But, even if the death sentence had been lifted, would it have taken long to impose a new one?

Now let us see the situation from the point of view of the Generalissimo of the Soviet Union, J. V. Stalin. His subordinate in Warsaw is Marshal of the Soviet Union Rokossovskiy. This subordinate carries out all orders unquestioningly, accurately and speedily. Why should Stalin conclude a military alliance with him? Even to contemplate such a step would show a flagrant disregard for the principles of subordination and would be an offence in itself. A sergeant has no right to make an agreement of any kind with the soldiers under him or a general with his officers. In the same way, a Generalissimo is not entitled to conclude alliances with his own Marshal. It is the right and duty of a commander to give orders and a subordinate is bound to obey these orders. Any other kind of relationship between commanders and their subordinates is entirely forbidden. The relationship between Stalin and Rokossovskiy was based upon the fact that Stalin gave the orders and that Rokossovskiy carried them out without question.

3

The fact that he knew no Polish did not disturb Rokossovskiy in the slightest. In those glorious days not a single general in the Polish army spoke Polish, relying instead on interpreters who were constantly in attendance.

In Russia in 1917 a Polish nobleman, Felix Dzerzhinskiy, established a blood-stained organisation; this was the Cheka, the forerunner of the GPU, NKVD, MGB, and KGB. Between 1939 and 1940 this organisation destroyed the flower of the Polish officer corps. During the war a new Polish army was formed in the Soviet Union. The soldiers and junior officers of this army were Poles, the senior officers and generals were Soviets. When they were transferred to the Polish army the Soviets received joint Polish-Soviet nationality and Polish military ranks, while remaining on the strength of the Soviet military hierarchy. Here is one case history from many thousands:

Fyodor Petrovich Polynin was born in 1906 in the province of Saratov. He joined the Red Army in 1928 and became a pilot. In 1938-39 he fought in China with the forces of Chiang Kai-Shek. He used a Chinese name and was given Chinese nationality. Although thus a Chinese subject, he was nevertheless made a 'Hero of the Soviet Union'. He returned to the Soviet Union and reverted to Soviet nationality. During the war he commanded the 13th Bomber Division and then the 6th Air Army. He became a Lieutenant-General in the Soviet Air Force. In 1944 he became a Polish general. He never learned Polish. He was made Commander of the Air Force of sovereign, independent Poland.

In 1946, while still holding this high position in Poland, he received the rank of 'Colonel-General of the Air Force'. The Air Force concerned was, of course, the Soviet one, for Polynin was also a Soviet General. The announcement that this rank had been awarded to the officer commanding the Polish Air Force was signed by the President of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Generalissimo of the Soviet Union, J. V. Stalin.

After a further short period in Poland, as if this was an entirely normal development, Fedya Polynin resumed his Soviet rank and was given the post of Deputy to the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Air Forces. During his years in command of the Polish Air Force, he learned not a single word of Polish. Why should he bother to do so? His orders reached him from Moscow in Russian and when he reported that they had been carried out he did so in Russian, too. None of his subordinates at the headquarters of the Polish Air Force spoke Polish either, so that there was no point in learning the language.

Once again, why should Stalin conclude a military alliance with Fedya Polynin, if the latter was no more than a subordinate of Rokossovskiy, who was himself subordinated to Stalin? Why set up a military alliance if a more reliable and simpler line of direct command was already in existence?

4

The Polish Army, which was set up in 1943 on Soviet territory, was simply a part of the Red Army, headed by Soviet commanders, and it did not, of course, recognise the Polish government-in-exile in London. In 1944 the Communists established a new 'people's' government, a large part of which consisted of investigators from the NKVD and from Soviet military counterintelligence (SMERSH). However, even after the 'people's' government had been established, the Polish army did not come under its command, remaining a part of the Soviet Army. After the war, the 'people's' government of Poland was quite simply not empowered to appoint the generals in the 'Polish' army or to promote or demote them. This was understandable, since the generals were also Soviet generals and posting them would amount to interference in the internal affairs of the USSR.

There was no reason why the Soviet government should have had the slightest intention of setting up any kind of Warsaw Treaty, Consultative Committee or other similarly non-functional superstructure. No one needed a treaty, since the Polish army was nothing more than a part of the Soviet army, and the Polish government, brought up to strength with Soviet cut-throats and bully boys, was not allowed to intervene in the affairs of the Polish army.

Nevertheless, after the death of Stalin, the Soviet government, headed by Marshal of the Soviet Union Bulganin, decided to conclude an official military agreement with the countries it was occupying. Communist propaganda proclaimed, at the top of its voice, as it continues to do, that this was a voluntary agreement, made between free countries. But a single example from the time when the official document was signed is an indication of the truth. The signatory for the Soviet Union was Marshal of the Soviet Union G. K. Zhukov, and for free, independent, popular, socialist Poland Marshal of the Soviet Union Rokossovskiy, assisted by Colonel-General S. G. Poplavskiy--Rokossovskiy's deputy. Marshal of the Soviet Union Bulganin, who was present at the ceremony, took the opportunity to award Colonel-General Poplavskiy the rank of General of the Army. You have, of course, guessed that Poplavskiy, who signed for Poland, was also a Soviet general and the subordinate of Marshals Bulganin, Zhukov and Rokossovskiy. Within two years Poplavskiy had returned to the USSR and become deputy to the Inspector General of the Soviet Army. These were the sort of miracles which took place in Warsaw, irrespective of the existence of the Warsaw Treaty. Rokossovskiy, Poplavskiy, Polynin and the others were compelled by Soviet legislation to carry out the orders which reached them from Moscow. The Treaty neither increased nor lessened Poland's dependence upon the USSR.

However Poland is a special case. With other East European countries it was much easier. In Czechoslovakia there were reliable people like Ludwig Svoboda, who

neutralised the Czech army in 1948 and did so again in 1968. He carried out the orders of the USSR promptly and to the letter and it was therefore not necessary to keep a Soviet Marshal in Prague holding a ministerial post in the Czech government. With the other East European countries, too, everything went well. During the war all of them had been enemies of the USSR and it was therefore possible to execute any political figure, general, officer or private soldier, at any given moment and to replace him with someone more cooperative. The system worked perfectly; the Soviet ambassadors to the countries of Eastern Europe kept a close eye on its operation. What sort of ambassadors these were you can judge from the fact that when the Warsaw Treaty was signed the Soviet Ambassador to Hungary, for instance, was Yuriy Andropov, who subsequently became head of the KGB. It was therefore understandable that Hungary should welcome the treaty warmly and sign it with deep pleasure.

Under Stalin, Poland and the other countries of Eastern Europe were governed by a system of open dictatorship, uncamouflaged in any way. The Warsaw Treaty did not exist for one simple reason--it was not needed. All decisions were taken in the Kremlin and monitored by the Kremlin. The Defence Ministers of the East European countries were regarded as equal in status to the Commanders of Soviet Military Districts and they came under the direct command of the Soviet Minister of Defence. All appointments and postings were decided upon by the Kremlin. The Defence Ministers of the 'sovereign' states of Eastern Europe were either appointed from the ranks of Soviet generals or were 'assisted' by Soviet military advisers. In Romania and Bulgaria, for instance, one such 'adviser' was Marshal of the Soviet Union Tolbukhin. In East Germany there was Marshal Zhukov himself, in Hungary Marshal of the Soviet Union Konev. Each adviser had at his disposal at least one tank army, several all-arms armies and special SMERSH punitive detachments. To disregard his 'advice' would be a very risky business.

After Stalin's death the Soviet leadership embarked on the process of 'liberalisation'. In Eastern Europe everything stayed as it was, for all that happened was that the Soviet government had decided to conceal its wolf's jaws behind the mask of a 'voluntary' agreement, after the NATO model.

To some people in Eastern Europe it really seemed as though dictatorship had come to an end and that the time for a voluntary military agreement had arrived. But they were quite wrong. Just one year after the signing of this 'voluntary' alliance the actions of Soviet tanks in Poland and Hungary gave clear proof that everything was still as it had been under Stalin, except for some small, cosmetic alterations.

5

Communist propaganda quite deliberately blends two concepts; that of the military organisation in force in the Communist states of Eastern Europe and that of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. The military organisation of the East European countries was set up immediately after the Red Army arrived on their territories, in 1944 and 1945. In some cases, for example Poland and Czechoslovakia, military pro-Communist formations had been established even before the arrival of the Red Army.

The armies of East European countries which were set up by Soviet 'military advisers' were fully supervised and controlled from Moscow. The military system which took shape was neither a multilateral organisation nor a series of bilateral defensive treaties, but was imposed, forcibly, on a unilateral basis in the form in which it still exists.

The Warsaw Treaty Organisation is a chimera, called into being to camouflage the tyranny of Soviet Communism in the countries under its occupation in order to create

an illusion of free will and corporate spirit. Communist propaganda claims that it was as a result of the establishment of NATO that the countries of Eastern Europe came together in a military alliance. The truth is that, at the end of the Second World War, the Soviet Union took full control of the armies of the countries which it had overrun, long before NATO came into existence. It was many years later that the Communists decided to conceal their mailed fist and attempt to present the creation of NATO as the moment when the military framework of Eastern Europe was set up.

But the Communists lacked the imagination to establish this purely ornamental organisation, which exists solely to conceal grim reality, tactfully and with taste. During the Organisation's first thirteen years the Ministers of Defence of the sovereign states, whether they were pro-Soviet puppets or actual Soviet generals and Marshals, were subordinated to the Commander-in-Chief, who was appointed by the Soviet government and who was himself Deputy Minister of Defence of the USSR. Thus, even in a legal sense, the Ministers of these theoretically sovereign states were directly subordinated to a Soviet Minister's deputy. After the Czechoslovak affair the similarly spurious Consultative Committee was set up. In this committee Ministers of Defence and Heads of State gather supposedly to talk as equals and allies. But this is pure play-acting. Everything remains as it was several decades ago. Decisions are still made in the Kremlin. The Consultative Committee takes no decisions for itself.

Any attempt to understand the complex and fanciful structure of committees and staffs which make up the Warsaw Treaty Organisation is a complete waste of time. It is rather like trying to understand how the Supreme Soviet arrives at its decisions or how the President of the Soviet Union governs the country--the nature of his authority and the extent of his responsibilities. You know before you start that, despite its great complexity, the organisation has absolutely no reality. The Supreme Soviet neither formulates policy nor takes decisions. It is purely decorative, like the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, there for show and nothing more. In the same way, the President of the Soviet Union himself does nothing, takes no decisions, and has neither responsibilities nor authority. His post was devised solely to camouflage the absolute power of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The Warsaw Treaty Organisation, then, is a body of the same type as the Supreme Soviet. It is a showpiece whose only function is to conceal the Kremlin's dictatorship. Its Consultative Committee was set up solely to hide the fact that all decisions are taken at the Headquarters of the Soviet Army, on Gogol Boulevard in Moscow. The function of the Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation is purely decorative. Like the President of the Soviet Union he is without authority. Although he is still listed among the first deputies of the Soviet Minister of Defence, this is a legacy of the past, and is no more than an honour, for he is remote from real power.

During a war, or any such undertaking as 'Operation Danube', the 'allied' divisions of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation are integrated in the Soviet Armies. None of the East European countries has the right to set up its own Corps, Armies or Fronts. They have only divisions commanded by Soviet generals. In the event of war, their Ministers of Defence would be concerned only with the reinforcement, build-up and technical servicing of their own divisions, which would operate as part of the United (that is the Soviet) Armed Forces.

Lastly, a few words on the ultimate goal of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation: the disbandment of all military blocs, in Europe and throughout the world. This is the real aspiration of our Soviet 'doves'. It is based on a very simple calculation. If NATO is disbanded, the West will have been neutralised, once and for all. The system of collective self-defence of the free countries will have ceased to exist. If the Warsaw Treaty Organisation is disbanded at the same time, the USSR loses nothing except a cumbersome publicity machine. It will remain in complete control of the armies of its

`allies'. The military organisation will survive, untouched. All that will be lost is the title itself and the organisation's bureaucratic ramifications, which are needed by nobody.

Let us suppose, for example, that France should suddenly return to NATO. Would this be a change? Certainly--one of almost global significance. Next, let us suppose that Cuba drops its `non-alignment' and joins the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. What would this change? Absolutely nothing. Cuba would remain as aggressive a pilot fish of the great shark as she is today.

6

There are millions of people who regard NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation as identical groupings. But to equate these two is absurd, because the Warsaw Treaty Organisation has no real existence. What does exist Soviet dictatorship and this has no need to consult its allies. If it is able to do so, it seizes them by the throat; if not it bides its time---Communists do not acknowledge any other type of relationship with their associates.

This is a truism, something which is known to everyone, and yet, every year, hundreds of books are published in which the Soviet Army is described as one of the forces making up the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. This is nonsense. The forces of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation are a part of the Soviet Army. The East European countries are equipped with Soviet weapons, instructed in Soviet methods at Soviet military academies and controlled by Soviet `advisers'. It is true that some of the East European divisions would be glad to turn round and use their bayonets on the Moscow leadership. But there are Soviet divisions who would be prepared to do this, too. Mutinies, on Soviet ships and in Soviet divisions are far from rare.

A situation in which Soviet propaganda stands the truth on its head and yet is believed by the whole world is by no means a new one. Before the Second World War the Soviet Communists established an international union of communist parties--the Comintern. In theory, the Soviet Communist Party was simply one of the members of this organisation. In practice, its leader, Stalin, was able to cause the leader of the Comintern, Zinoviev, theoretically his superior, to be removed and shot.... Later, during the Great Purge, he had the leaders of fraternal communist parties executed without trial and without consequences to himself. Officially the Soviet Communist Party was a member of the Comintern, but in fact the Comintern itself was a subsidiary organisation of the Soviet Party. The standing of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation is exactly similar. Officially the Soviet Army is a member of this organisation but in practice the organisation is itself a part of the Soviet Army. And the fact that the Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation is an official deputy of the Soviet Minister of Defence is no coincidence.

In the 1950s it was decided that a building should be erected in Moscow to house the staff of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. But it was never put up because nobody needed it--any more than they need the whole organisation. The Soviet General Staff exists and this is all that is required to direct both the Soviet Army and all its `younger brothers'.

The Bermuda Triangle

1

A triangle is the strongest and most rigid geometric figure. If the planks of a door which you have knocked together begin to warp, nail another plank diagonally across them. This will divide your rectangular construction into two triangles and the door will then have the necessary stability.

The triangle has been used in engineering for a very long time. Look at the Eiffel tower, at the metal framework of the airship Hindenburg, or just at any railway bridge, and you will see that each of these is an amalgamation of thousands of triangles, which give the structure rigidity and stability.

The triangle is strong and stable, not only in engineering but in politics, too. Political systems based on division of power and on the interplay of three balancing forces have been the most stable throughout history. These are the principles upon which the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is built.

Enormous problems and difficulties are said to lie before the Soviet Union. But Soviet leaders have always been confronted by problems of considerable magnitude, from the very beginnings of Soviet power. Then, too, the collapse of the regime was thought to be inevitable. But it survived four years of bloody struggle against the Russian army; it survived the mutiny of the Baltic fleet, which had itself helped to bring about the Revolution; it survived the mass flight of the intelligentsia, the opposition of the peasants, the massive blood-letting of the revolutionary period, the Civil War, the unprecedented slaughter of millions during collectivisation, and endless bloody purges. It also withstood diplomatic isolation and political blockade, the starvation of scores of millions of those it enslaves and an unexpected onslaught by 190 German divisions, despite the unwillingness of many of its own soldiers to fight for its interests.

So one should not be in a hurry to bury the Soviet regime. It is still, fairly firmly, on its feet. There are several reasons for its stability--the scores of millions of corpses within its foundations, disinterested Western help, the reluctance of the free world to defend its own freedom. But there is one other most important factor which gives the Soviet regime its internal stability--the triangular structure of the state.

Only three forces are active in the Soviet political arena--the Party, the Army and the KGB. Each of these possesses enormous power, but this is exceeded by the combined strength of the other two. Each has its own secret organisation, which is capable of reaching into hostile countries and monitoring developments there. The Party has its Control Commission--a secret organisation which has almost as much influence inside the country as the KGB. The KGB is a grouping of many different secret departments, some of which keep an eye on the Party. The Army has its own secret service--the GRU--the most effective military intelligence service in the world.

Each of these three forces is hostile to the others and has certain, not unreasonable pretensions to absolute power but its initiatives will always fail in the face of the combined opposition of the other two.

Of the three, the Party has the smallest resources for self-defence in open conflict. But it has a strong lever at its disposal--the appointment and posting of all officials. Every general in the Army and every colonel in the KGB takes up his post and is promoted or demoted only with the approval of the Administrative Department of the Central Committee of the Party. In addition, the Party controls all propaganda and ideological work and it is always the Party which decides what constitutes true Marxism and what represents a deviation from its general line. Marxism can be used as an additional weapon when it becomes necessary to dismiss an unwanted official from the KGB, the Army or even the Party. The Party's right to nominate and promote individuals is supported by both the Army and the KGB. If the Party were to lose this privilege to the KGB, the Army would be in mortal danger. If the Army took it over, the KGB would be in an equally dangerous situation. For this reason, neither of them

objects to the Party's privilege--and it is this privilege which makes the Party the most influential member of the triumvirate.

The KGB is the craftiest member of this troika. It is able, whenever it wishes, to recruit a party or a military leader as its agent: if the official refuses he can be destroyed by a compromise operation devised by the KGB. The Party remembers, only too clearly, how the KGB's predecessor was able to destroy the entire Central Committee during the course of a single year. The Army, for its part, remembers how, within the space of two months, the same organisation was able to annihilate all its generals. However, the secret power of the KGB and its cunning are its weakness as well as its strength. Both the Party and the Army have a deep fear of the KGB and for this reason they keep a very close eye on the behaviour of its leaders, changing them quickly and decisively, if this becomes necessary.

The Army is potentially the most powerful of the three and therefore it has the fewest rights. The Party and the KGB know very well that, if Communism should collapse, they will be shot by their own countrymen, but that this will not happen to the Army. The Party and the KGB acknowledge the might of the Army. Without it their policies could not be carried out, either at home or abroad. The Party and the KGB keep the Army at a careful distance, rather as two hunters might control a captured leopard with chains, from two different sides. The tautness of this chain is felt even at regimental and battalion level. The Party has a political Commissar in every detachment and the KGB a Special Department.

2

This triangle of power represents a Bermuda Triangle for those who live within it. The trio have long ago adopted the rule that none of the legs of this tripod may extend too far. If this should happen, the other two immediately intervene, and chop off the excess.

Let us look at an example of the way this triangle of power functions. Stalin died in 1953. Observers concluded unanimously that Beriya would take command--Beriya the chief inquisitor and head policeman. Who else was there? Beriya, his gang of ruffians, and the whole of his organisation realised that their chance to lead had arrived. The power in their hands was unbelievable. There was a special file on every senior party functionary and every general and there would be no difficulty in putting any one of them before a firing squad. It was this very power which destroyed Beriya. Both the Army and the Party understood their predicament. This brought them together and together they cut off the head of the chief executioner. The most powerful members of the security apparatus came to unpleasant ends and their whole machine of oppression was held up to public ridicule. The propaganda organisation of the Party worked overtime to explain to the country the crimes of Stalin and of his whole security apparatus.

However, having toppled Beriya from his pedestal, the Party began to feel uncomfortable; here it was, face to face with the captive leopard. The NKVD had released the chain it held around the animal's neck and it sensed freedom. The inevitable outcome was that the Army would gobble up its master. Marshal Zhukov acquired extraordinary power, at home and abroad. He demanded a fourth Gold Star of a Hero of the Soviet Union (Stalin had had only two and Beriya one). Perhaps such outward show was unimportant, but Zhukov also demanded the removal from the Army of all political commissars--he was trying to shake off the remaining chain. The Party realised that this could only end in disaster and that, without help, it was quite unable to resist the Army's pressure. An urgent request for assistance went to the KGB and, with the latter's help, Zhukov was dismissed. The wartime Marshals followed

him into the wilderness, and then the ranks of the generals and of military intelligence were methodically thinned. The military budget was drastically reduced and purges and cuts followed thick and fast. These cost the Soviet Army 1,200,000 men, many of them front-line officers during the war.

The KGB was still unable to recover the stature it had lost after the fall of Beriya, and the Party began a new campaign of purges and of ridicule against it. 1962 marked the Party's triumph over both the KGB, defeated at the hands of the Army, and the Army, humiliated with the help of the KGB; with, finally, a second victory over the KGB won by the Party alone. The leg of the tripod represented by the Party began to extend to a dangerous degree.

But the triumph was short-lived. The theoretically impossible happened. The two mortal enemies, the Army and the KGB, each deeply aggrieved, united against the Party. Their great strength brought down the head of the Party, Khrushchev, who fell almost without a sound. How could he have withstood such a combination?

The era which followed his fall provided ample evidence of the remarkable inner stability of the triangular structure even in the most critical situations--Czechoslovakia, internal crises, economic collapse, Vietnam, Africa, Afghanistan. The regime has survived all these.

The Army has not thrown itself upon the KGB, nor has the KGB savaged the Army. Both tolerate the presence of the Party, which they acknowledge as an arbitrator or perhaps rather as a second in a duel, whose help each side tries to secure for itself.

In the centre of the triangle, or more accurately, above the centre, sits the Politburo. This organisation should not be seen as the summit of the Party, for it represents neutral territory, on which the three forces gather to grapple with one another.

Both the Army and the KGB are equally represented in the Politburo. With their agreement, the Party takes the leading role; the Party bosses restrain the others and act as peacemakers in the constant squabbles.

The Politburo plays a decisive part in Soviet society. In effect it has become a substitute for God. Portraits of its members are on display in every street and square. It has the last word in the resolution of any problem, at home or abroad. It has complete power in every field--legislative, executive, judicial, military, political, administrative, even religious.

Representing, as it does, a fusion of three powers, the Politburo is fully aware that it draws its own stability from each of these sources. It can be compared to the seat of a three-legged stool. If one of the legs is longer than the others, the stool will fall over. The same will happen if one of the legs is shorter than the others. For their own safety, therefore, the members of the Politburo, whether they come from the Party, the KGB or the Army, do everything they can to maintain equilibrium. The secret of Brezhnev's survival lies in his skill in keeping the balance between the trio, restraining any two from combining against the third.

Why does the system of higher military control appear complicated?

1

When Western specialists talk about the organisation of Soviet regiments and divisions, their explanations are simple and comprehensive. The diagrams they draw, too, are simple. At a single glance one can see who is subordinated to whom. But,

once the specialists begin talking about the organisational system of control at higher levels, the picture becomes so complicated that no one can understand it. The diagrams explaining the system of higher military control published in the West resemble those showing the defences of a sizeable bank in Zurich or Basle: square boxes, lines, circles, intersections. The uninitiated might gain the impression that there is dual control at the top--or, even worse, that there is no firm hand and therefore complete anarchy.

In fact, the control structure from top to bottom is simple to the point of primitiveness. Why, then, does it seem complicated to foreign observers? Simply because they study the Soviet Union as they would any other foreign country; they try to explain everything which happens there in language their readers can understand, in generally accepted categories--in other words, in the language of common sense. However, the Soviet Union is a unique phenomenon, which cannot be understood by applying a frame of reference based on experience elsewhere. Only 3% of arable land in the Soviet Union is in the hands of private owners, and not a single tractor or a kilogram of fertiliser. This 3% feeds practically the whole country. If the private owners were given another 1/2 % there would be no problem with food production. But the Communists prefer to waste 400 tons of gold each year buying wheat abroad. Just try to explain this in normal common sense language.

Thus, when examining the system of higher military control, the reader must not attempt to draw parallels with human society in other parts of the world. Remember that Communists have their own logic, their own brand of common sense.

2

Let us take a diagram explaining the system of higher military control, drawn by some Western specialist on Soviet affairs, and try to simplify it. Among the maze of criss-crossing lines we will try to pick out the outlines of a pyramid of granite.

Our specialist has, of course, shown the President at the very top, with the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet next and then the two chambers of the Supreme Soviet. But the Party must not be forgotten. So there, together with the President, are the General Secretary of the Party, the Politburo, and the Central Committee. Here there is disagreement among the experts about who should be shown higher up the page and who lower--the General Secretary or the President.

Let us clarify the picture. Here are the names of past General Secretaries: Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev. Try to remember the names of the Presidents of the Soviet Union during the periods when those three were in power. Even the experts cannot remember. I have put other questions to these experts. Why, when Stalin went to meet the President of the United States, did he not take the Soviet President with him? When the Cuban rocket crisis was at its height and Khrushchev discussed the fate of the world on the hot line with the American President, why was it he who did this rather than the Soviet President? Surely it was the two Presidents who should have talked the matter over? And why, when Brezhnev talks about missiles with the American President, does he not give the Soviet President a seat at the conference table?

In order to decide which of the two--President or General Secretary--should be shown at the top, it is worth recalling the relationship between Stalin and his President, Kalinin. Stalin gave orders that Kalinin's wife and his closest friends should be shot but that it should appear that the President himself had issued the order. One Soviet historian tells us that, as he signed the death sentence on his own wife, the President 'wept from grief and powerlessness'.

In order to simplify our diagram, take a red pencil and cross out the Presidency. It is nothing but an unnecessary ornament which leads to confusion. If war breaks out, no future historian will remember that standing by the side of the General Secretary was some President or other now totally forgotten who was weeping from grief and powerlessness.

As well as the Presidency, cross out the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet and both of its chambers. They are not involved in any way with either the government of the country or the control of its armed forces. Judge for yourself--this Soviet 'parliament' meets twice a year for four or five days and discusses thirty to forty questions each day. Bearing in mind that the Deputies do not overwork themselves, one can calculate the number of minutes they spend on each question. The Soviet parliament has fifteen or so permanent committees dealing with such questions as the supply of consumer goods (where to buy lavatory paper) or the provision of services (how to get taps mended). But none of these committees concerns itself with the affairs of the armed forces, with the KGB, with military industry (which provides employment for twelve separate ministries), or with prisons. The Soviet parliament has never discussed the reasons why Soviet forces are in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Cuba or Afghanistan. During the Second World War it did not meet once. Why should such an organisation be included among those concerned with questions of higher military control?

* Illustration

Military and Political Infrastructure of the Soviet Union

An example of Western misunderstanding. But who runs the country?

But this is not the most important point. The Soviet parliament is nothing but a parasite. All its decisions are reached unanimously. The nomination of a new President--unanimous. The removal and ignominious dismissal of his predecessor--also unanimous. In reality, these nominations and dismissals took place many months earlier. Parliament simply ratifies them subsequently--and unanimously. When Parliament does not meet for several years, nobody knows the reason and nothing changes as a result. If all its members were tried as parasites and sent to prison under Soviet law nothing would change: Soviet Presidents would continue to be appointed with great ceremony and chased from office in disgrace. According to Soviet law, the rank of Marshal must be conferred--and removed--by Parliament. But several Marshals have been shot without any reference to Parliament. Just try and work out how many Marshals have been appointed and how many shot without the knowledge or consent of Parliament. And this did not only happen during the Stalinist Terror. It was under Khrushchev that Marshal of the Soviet Union Beriya was shot, that Marshal Bulganin was struck off the pay-roll, that eleven other Marshals were dismissed from their posts. All this was done without the knowledge or consent of the Soviet Parliament.

But, you will say, if neither the President nor Parliament does anything or is responsible for anything and is there only to approve any--absolutely any--decision unanimously, why were their positions in the system ever created? The answer is, as camouflage.

If all power were seen to rest entirely in the hands of the Politburo, this might offend both the Soviet people and the rest of the world. To avoid this, Soviet propaganda compiles extremely complicated diagrams, as complicated as those for a perpetual motion machine, which its inventor purposely makes more and more intricate, so that no one will realise that hidden inside his brainchild there is a dwarf who is turning the wheels.

It is a great pity that many Western specialists, who know that during the war the Soviet President was not allowed to attend the meetings of the military leadership, nevertheless show him at the very top of their diagrams just where he is said to be by Soviet propaganda.

There is one situation in which the Soviet President can become a person of importance, and this has happened only once in Soviet history. A General Secretary decided that he should be President as well. Naturally, this was done without an election of any sort. The name of this President was--and is--Brezhnev. However, it is only abroad that he is honoured as President. Everyone at home knows that 'President' is completely meaningless and calls him by his real title--General Secretary--which has, of course, the true ring of power.

3

We have removed these useless embellishments from the diagram but that is not all we must do. Do not cross out the Council of Ministers, but move them to one side. Why? you may ask. Is the Minister of Defence not subject to the decisions of the Council of Ministers? That is correct. He is not. The Council of Ministers only has control over industry, which in the USSR is almost entirely military. The Soviet Union uses more cloth, of much better quality, for the production of parachutes than for the manufacture of clothes for 260 million people. However, of these 260 million, very many receive military uniforms, of good quality; all that is left, for the remainder, is material of appalling quality, and there is not enough even of that.

In the Soviet Union the number of cars in private ownership is lower, per thousand head of the population, than the total owned by the black inhabitants of South Africa, for whose freedom the United Nations is fighting so fervently. But, against this, the number of tanks in the Soviet Union is greater than in the rest of the whole world put together.

Twelve of the Ministries which the Council controls produce nothing but military equipment. All the remainder (coal, steel production, energy, etc.) work in the interests of those which produce arms.

Thus, the Council of Ministers is, essentially, a single gigantic economic organisation, supporting the Army. It is, therefore, with all its military and auxiliary industry, a sort of subsidiary rear organisation of the Army. It possesses colossal power over those who produce military equipment but, against this, it has not even the authority to send a new doorman to one of the Soviet embassies abroad. This can be done only by the Party or, more accurately, by the Party's Central Committee.

Why is the make-up of the Defence Council kept secret?

1

By now much of our diagram has been simplified. The summit of power has become visible--the Politburo, in which sit representatives of the Party, the KGB, and the Army. Decisions taken in the Politburo by the most senior representatives of these organisations are also implemented by them. For instance, when Afghanistan was suddenly invaded by the Army on the orders of the Politburo, the KGB removed unsuitable senior personnel, while the Party arranged diversionary operations and worked up propaganda campaigns at home and abroad.

The role of the Council of Ministers is important but not decisive. The Council is responsible for increasing military productivity, for the prompt delivery to the forces of military equipment, ammunition and fuel, for the uninterrupted functioning of the military industries and of the national economy, which works only in support of the military industries and therefore in the interests of the Army. The Chairman of the Council will certainly be present when decisions on these subjects are taken but as one of the members of the Politburo, working for the interests of the Army, rather than as the head of the Council.

What does the highly secret organisation known as the Defence Council do at a time like this? Officially, all that is known about this organisation is that it is headed by Brezhnev. The identities of the other members of the Council are kept secret. What sort of organisation is it? Why is its make-up given no publicity? Soviet propaganda publishes the names of the head of the KGB and of his deputies, those of the heads of ministries, of the heads of all military research institutions, of the Defence Minister and of all his deputies. The names of those responsible for the production of atomic warheads and for missile programmes are officially known, so are those of the head of the GRU and of the head of the disinformation service. Why are the names of those who are responsible for overall decisions, at the highest level of all, kept secret?

Let us examine the Defence Council from two different points of view. Firstly who sits on such a council? Some observers believe that it is made up of the most prominent members of the Politburo and the leading Marshals. They are mistaken. These officials attend the Chief Military Council, which is subordinate to the Defence Council. The Defence Council is something more than a mixture of Marshals and Politburo members. What could be superior to such a group? The answer is--members of the Politburo without any outsiders. Not all the members: only the most influential.

Secondly, what is the position of the Defence Council vis-a-vis the Politburo--higher, the same or lower? If the Defence Council had more power than the Politburo its first act would be to split up this group of geriatrics, so that they would not interfere. If the Defence Council were equal in power to the Politburo we should witness a dramatic battle between these two giants, for there is only room for one such organisation at the top. A dictatorship cannot exist for long when power is shared between two groups. Two dictators cannot co-exist. Perhaps, then, the Defence Council is of slightly lower status than the Politburo? But there would be no place for it in this case, either. Directly below the Politburo is the Chief Military Council, which links the Politburo with the Army, serving to bond the two together. Thus the Defence Council cannot be either inferior or superior to the Politburo; nor can it hold an equal position. The Defence Council exists, in fact, within the Politburo itself. Its membership is kept secret only because it contains no one but members of the Politburo and it is considered undesirable to give unnecessary emphasis to the absolute power enjoyed by this organisation.

Neither the Soviet Union nor its many vassal states contain any power higher than or independent of the Politburo. The Politburo possesses all legislative, executive, judicial, administrative, religious, political, economic and every other power. It is unthinkable that such an organisation should be prepared to allow any other to take decisions on the momentous problems produced by Soviet usurpations and 'adventures' throughout the world, problems of war and peace, of life and death. The day when the Politburo releases its hold will be its last. That day has not yet come....

Many Western specialists believe the Defence Council to be something new, created by Brezhnev. But nothing changes in the Soviet Union, especially in the system by

which it is governed. The system stabilised itself long ago and it is almost impossible to change it in any way. New, decorative organisations can be devised and added but changes to the basic structure of the Soviet Union are out of the question. Khrushchev tried to introduce some and the system destroyed him. Brezhnev is wiser and he makes no attempts at change. He rules with the help of a system which was established in the early days of Stalin and which has remained unchanged ever since.

Only the labels change in the USSR. The security organisation has been known successively as the VChK, GPU, OGPU, NKVD, NKGB, MGB, and KGB. Some think that these services differed from one another in some way but it was only their labels which did so. The Party has been called the RKP(B), the VKP(B), the KPSS. The Army began as the Red Army, then became the Soviet Army and its highest overall council has been successively labelled KVMD, SNKMVD, NKMVD, NKO, NKVS, MVS, and MO, while remaining one and the same organisation.

Exactly the same has happened with the Defence Council. It changes its name as a snake sheds its skin, painlessly. But it is still the same snake. In Lenin's day it was called the Workers' and Peasants' Defence Council or simply the Defence Council, then the Council for Labour and Defence. Subsequently, since its members all belonged to the Politburo, it became the Military Commission of the Politburo.

Immediately after the outbreak of war with Germany, the State Committee for Defence was established, which, entirely legally and officially, acquired the full powers of the President, the Supreme Soviet, the Government, the Supreme Court, the Central Committee of the Party and of all other authorities and organisations. The decisions of the State Committee for Defence had the force of martial law and were mandatory for all individuals and organisations including the Supreme Commander, and the President. The State Committee for Defence had five members:

Stalin--its President

Molotov--his first deputy

Malenkov--the head of the Party's bureaucracy

Beriya--the head of the security organisation

Voroshilov--the senior officer of the Army

These five were the most influential members of the Politburo, so that the State Committee for Defence consisted not of the whole Politburo, but of its most influential component parts. Take another look at its composition and you will recognise our triangle. There are the Supreme Being, his Right Hand and, below them, the triangle--Party, KGB, Army. Note the absence of the President of the Soviet Union, Kalinin. He is a member of the Politburo, but a purely nominal one. He possesses no power and there is therefore no place for him in an organisation which is omnipotent.

Before the war the same powerful quintet existed inside the Politburo but at that time they called themselves simply the Military Commission of the Politburo. Then, too, these five were all-powerful but they worked discreetly behind the scenes, while the stage was occupied by the President, the Supreme Soviet, the Government, the Central Committee and other decorative but superfluous organisations and individuals. When war began nothing changed, except that the quintet took over the stage and were seen in their true roles, deciding the fate of tens of millions of people.

Naturally, this group did not allow power to slip from their grasp when the war ended; they disappeared back into the shadows, calling themselves the Military Commission of the Politburo once again and pushing to the front of the stage a series of pitiable clowns and cowards who 'wept from grief and powerlessness' while this group slaughtered their nearest and dearest.

The Second World War threw up a group of brilliant military leaders--Zhukov, Rokossovskiy, Vasilevskiy, Konev, Yeremenko--but not one of them was allowed by the 'big five' to enter the sacred precincts of the State Committee for Defence. The

Committee's members knew quite well that in order to retain power they must safeguard their privileges with great care. For this reason, throughout the war, no single individual, however distinguished, who was not a member of the Politburo, was admitted to the Committee. All questions were decided by the Politburo members who belonged to the Committee and they were then discussed with Army representatives at a lower level, in the Stavka, to which both Politburo members and leading Marshals belonged.

Precisely the same organisation exists today. The Defence Council is yesterday's State Committee for Defence under another name. Its membership is drawn exclusively from the Politburo, and then only from those with the greatest power. It is they who take all decisions, which are then discussed at the Chief Military Council (otherwise known as the Stavka) which is attended by members of the Politburo and by the leading Marshals.

Brezhnev is the old wolf of the Politburo. His long period in power has made him the equal of Stalin. One can see why he is disinclined to experiment with the system by which power over the Army is exercised. He follows the road which Stalin built, carefully adhering to the rules laid down by that experienced old tyrant. These are simple: essentially, before you sit down at a table with the Marshals at the Chief Military Council decide everything with the Politburo at the Defence Council. Brezhnev knows that any modification of these rules would mean that he must share his present unlimited powers with the Marshals--and that this is equivalent to suicide. This is why the Defence Council--the highest institution within the Soviet dictatorship--consists of the most influential members of the Politburo and of no one else.

The Organisation of the Soviet Armed Forces

1

The system by which the Soviet Armed Forces are controlled is simplified to the greatest possible extent. It is deliberately kept simple in design, just like every Soviet tank, fighter aircraft, missile or military plan. Soviet marshals and generals believe, not unreasonably, that, in a war, other things being equal, it is the simpler weapon, plan or organisation which is more likely to succeed.

Western specialists make a careful study of the obscure and intricate lay-out of Soviet military organisation, for they see the Soviet Army as being similar to any other national army. However, to any other army peace represents normality and war an abnormal, temporary situation. The Soviet Army (more accurately the Red Army) is the striking force of world revolution. It was brought into being to serve the world revolution and, although that revolution has not yet come, the Soviet Army is poised and waiting for it, ready to fan into life any spark or ember which appears anywhere in the world, no matter what the consequences might be. Normality, for the Soviet Army, is a revolutionary war; peace is an abnormal and temporary situation.

In order to understand the structure of the military leadership of the Soviet Union, we must examine it as it exists in wartime. The same structure is preserved in peacetime, although a variety of decorative features, which completely distort the true picture, are added as camouflage. Unfortunately, most researchers do not attempt to distinguish the really important parts of the organisation from those which are completely unnecessary and there purely for show.

We already know that in wartime the Soviet Union and the countries which it dominates would be ruled by the Defence Council, an organisation first known as the

Workers' and Peasants' Defence Council, next as the Labour and Defence Council and then as the State Committee for Defence.

On this Council are one representative each from the Party, the Army, and the KGB and two others who preside over these organisations--the General Secretary and his closest associate. Until his recent death the latter post was held by Mikhail Suslov.

The Defence Council possesses unrestricted powers. It functioned in wartime and has been preserved in peacetime with the difference that, whereas during wartime it worked openly and in full view, in peacetime it functions from behind the cover offered by the President of the Soviet Union, the Supreme Soviet, elections, deputies, public prosecutors and similar irrelevancies. Their only function is to conceal what is going on behind the scenes.

Directly subordinate to the Defence Council is the Headquarters (Stavka) of the Supreme Commander, which is known in peacetime as the Chief Military Council. To it belong the Supreme Commander and his closest deputies, together with certain members of the Politburo. The Supreme Commander is appointed by the Defence Council. He may be either the Minister of Defence, as was the case with Marshal Timoshenko, or the General Secretary of the Party, as with Stalin, who also headed both the Stavka and the civil administration. If the Minister of Defence is not appointed Supreme Commander he becomes First Deputy to the latter. The organisation working for the Stavka is the General Staff, which prepares proposals, works out the details of the Supreme Commander's instructions and supervises their execution.

2

In wartime, the armed forces of the USSR and of the countries under its rule are directed by the Stavka along two clearly differentiated lines of control: the operational (fighting) and administrative (rear).

The line of operational subordination:

Directly subordinate to the Supreme Commander are five Commanders-in-Chief and eight Commanders. The Commanders-in-Chief are responsible for:

The Western Strategic Direction

The South-Western Strategic Direction

The Far Eastern Strategic Direction

The Strategic Rocket Forces

The National Air Defence Forces

The Commanders are responsible for:

The Long-Range Air Force

The Airborne Forces

Military Transport Aviation

The Northern Fleet

Individual Front--Northern, Baltic, Trans-Caucasian and Turkestan.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Western Strategic Direction has under his command four Fronts, one Group of Tank Armies and the Baltic Fleet,

The Commander-in-Chief of the South-Western Strategic Direction also commands four Fronts, one Group of Tank Armies and the Black Sea Fleet.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Far Eastern Strategic Direction is responsible for four Fronts and the Pacific Fleet.

The Fronts subordinated to the Strategic Directions and individual Fronts, subordinated directly to the Stavka, consist of All-Arms, Tank and Air Armies. The Armies are made up of Divisions. East European Divisions are included in Armies,

which can be commanded only by Soviet generals. The commanders of East European divisions are thus subordinated directly to Soviet command--to Army Commanders, then to Fronts, Strategic Directions and ultimately to the Defence Council--in other words to the Soviet Politburo. East European governments can therefore exert absolutely no influence over the progress of military operations.

The line of administrative subordination:

The First Deputy of the Minister of Defence is subordinated to the Supreme Commander. At present the post is held by Marshal S. L. Sokolov, under whom come four Commanders-in-Chief (Air Forces, Land Forces, Naval Forces, Warsaw Treaty Organisation) and sixteen Commanders of Military Districts.

The Commanders-in-Chief are responsible for the establishment of reserves, for bringing forces up to strength, re-equipment, supply of forces engaged in combat operations, development of new military equipment, study of combat experience, training of personnel, etc. The Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation has precisely these responsibilities but only on behalf of the East European divisions operating as part of the United (i.e. Soviet) forces. He has full control over all the East European Ministries of Defence. His task is to ensure that these Ministries bring their divisions up to strength, and to re-equip and supply them according to schedule. In wartime he has only a modest role. It is now clear why the function of the Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation is seen in the USSR as being a purely honorific legacy from the past, remote from real power.

Each of the sixteen Commanders of Military Districts is a territorial functionary, a sort of military governor. In questions concerning the stability of Soviet authority in the territories entrusted to them, they are responsible directly to the Politburo (Defence Council), while on subjects concerning the administration of military industries, transport and mobilisation they are subordinated to the First Deputy of the Minister of Defence, through him to the Stavka and ultimately to the Defence Council.

Troops acting as reserve forces, to be used to bring units up to strength, for re-equipment, etc., may be stationed in the territories of Military Districts. These troops are subordinate, not to operational commanders but to the Military District Commanders, through them to the Commander-in-Chief, to the First Deputy and then to the Stavka. For instance, during war, on the territory of the Urals Military District there would be one Air Division (to replace losses), one Tank Army (Stavka reserve), one Polish tank division (for re-equipment) and three battalions of marine infantry (a new formation). These units will be subordinate to the Commander of the Urals Military District and through him, as regards the Air Division, to the Commander-in-Chief of the Air Forces, while the Tank Army comes under the Commander-in-Chief of Land Forces, the Polish division to the Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation and the battalions of marine infantry to the Commander-in-Chief of Naval Forces. Each Commander-in-Chief has the right to give orders to the Commander of a Military District, but only in matters concerning sub-units subordinate to him. Because the complement of each Military District always consists mainly of sub-units of the Land Forces some Western observers have the impression that Military Districts are subordinated to the Commanders-in-Chief of Land Forces. But this is not so. The Commander of a Military District has very wide powers, which are not in any way subject to the control of the Commander-in-Chief of Land Forces. As soon as the Stavka decides to transfer one or other sub-unit to an operational army, the sub-unit ceases to be controlled by the line of administrative subordination and comes under the instructions of the operational commander.

In wartime the system for controlling the Soviet Union, the countries which it has occupied and the entire united armed forces is stripped of the whole of its unnecessary decorative superstructure. The division between the operational and administrative lines of subordination then becomes apparent.

In peacetime the operational and administrative structures are blended with one another; this produces a misleading appearance of complexity, duplication and muddle. Despite this, the system which one can see clearly in wartime continues to function in peacetime. One simply needs to look at it carefully, to distinguish one structure from another and to ignore useless embellishments.

But is it possible to spot the summit of the edifice in peacetime--the Defence Council and the Stavka? This is quite simple. Each year on 7 November a military parade takes place on Red Square in Moscow. The whole military and political leadership gathers in the stands on top of Lenin's mausoleum. The position of each person is clearly discernible. For such a position, for each place in the stands, there is a constant, savage but silent struggle, like that which goes on in a pack of wolves for a place closer to the leader, and then for the leader's place itself. This jostling for position has already continued for many decades and each place has cost too much blood for it to be surrendered without a battle.

As is to be expected, the General Secretary and the Minister of Defence stand shoulder to shoulder in the centre of the tribune. To the left of the General Secretary are the members of the Politburo, to the right of the Minister of Defence are the Marshals. The stands on the mausoleum are the only place where the members of the political and military leadership parade, each in the position where he belongs. This is the only place where each individual shows his retinue, his rivals and his enemies, the whole country and the whole world how close he is to the centre of power. You can be sure that if the head of the KGB could take his place by the side of the General Secretary he would do so immediately, but this place is always occupied by a more influential individual--the Chief Ideologist. You can be certain that if the Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation could move closer to the centre he would immediately do so, but the place he is after is already occupied by the almighty Chief of the General Staff.

On the day after the parade you can buy a copy of *Pravda* for three kopeks and on the front page, immediately beneath the masthead, you can see a photograph of the entire political and military leadership.

Take a red pencil and mark the General Secretary and the four other members of the Politburo standing closest to him. These are the members of the Defence Council. They run the country. It is to them that hundreds of millions are enslaved, from Havana to Ulan Bator. It is they who will control the fate of the hundreds of millions in their power when the time comes to 'liberate' new peoples and new countries.

Now, mark the General Secretary, the member of the Politburo closest to him and the five Marshals nearest to him. This is the Stavka.

High Commands in the Strategic Directions

A platoon commander has three or four, sometimes five, sections under his command. It is pointless to give him more than this. He would be quite unable to exercise effective control over so large a platoon. If you have another, sixth, section it would be better to form two platoons of three sections each.

A company commander has three, four, or sometimes five platoons under his command. There is no point in giving him more--he just could not control them.

This system, under which each successive commander controls between three and five detachments, is used universally and at all levels. A Front Commander, for instance, directs three or four and sometimes five Armies. And it is at just this level that the system breaks down. The Soviet Army has sixteen Military Districts and four Army Groups. In the event of all-out war each District and each Army Group is able to form one Front from its own resources. How, though, can the Stavka control twenty Fronts simultaneously? Would it not be simpler to interpose a new intermediate link in the chain of command, which would control the operations of three or four and sometimes five Fronts? In this way the Stavka could be in immediate control not of twenty Fronts but of between three and five of the new intermediate units. Such an innovation would complete the whole balanced system of control, in a logical fashion.

In fact, intermediate control links between the Stavka and the Fronts do exist, but they are given no publicity. They are designated as High Commands in the Strategic Directions. The first mention of these command links occurred in the Soviet military press in 1929. They were set up two years later, but their existence was kept secret and was not referred to officially. Immediately after the outbreak of the Second World War they were officially brought into existence.

During the first two weeks of the war, official announcements were made about the formation of North-Western, Western and South-Western Strategic Directions. Each Direction consisted of between three and five Fronts. At the head of each Direction was a Commander-in-Chief, who was subordinated to the Stavka.

Just how important each of these High Commands were can be judged by looking at the composition of the Western Strategic Direction. The Commander-in-Chief was Marshal of the Soviet Union S. K. Timoshenko, who held the post of Minister of Defence at the outbreak of war. The Political Commissar was Politburo member N. A. Bulganin, one of those closest to Stalin, who later became a Marshal of the Soviet Union and President of the Council of Ministers. The Chief of Staff was Marshal B. M. Shaposhnikov, the pre-war Chief of the General Staff. The other Strategic Directions also had command personnel of approximately the same calibre--all the posts were occupied by Marshals or members of the Politburo.

In 1942 a further High Command, the North Caucasus Strategic Direction, was established, incorporating two Fronts and the Black Sea Fleet. Its Commander-in-Chief was Marshal S. M. Budennyi.

However it was subsequently decided that no further steps in this direction should be taken for the time being. The High Commands of the Strategic Directions were abolished and the Stavka took over direct control of the Fronts, which totalled fifteen. However the idea of an intermediate link was not abandoned. Frequently throughout the war representatives of the Stavka, usually Marshals Zhukov or Vasilyevskiy, were detached to work with those who were preparing large-scale operations and coordinating the work of several Fronts. Among the most brilliant of many examples of such coordinated efforts are the battles for Stalingrad and Kursk and the advance into Byelorussia. What amounted to a temporary grouping of Fronts, under a single command, was set up for each of these operations. A system of this sort provided greater flexibility and justified itself completely in conditions in which operations were being carried out against a single opponent. As soon as the decision had been taken to go to war with Japan, in 1945, the Far Eastern Strategic Direction was set up, consisting of three Fronts, one Fleet and the armed forces of Mongolia. The Commander-in-Chief of the Direction was Marshal A. M. Vasilyevskiy.

It is interesting to note that the very existence of a Far Eastern Strategic Direction with its own High Command was kept secret. As camouflage, Marshal Vasilyevskiy's

headquarters were referred to as 'Colonel-General Vasilyev's Group'. Many officers, including some generals, among them all the division and corps commanders, had no idea of Vasilyevskiy's function, supposing that all the Far Eastern Fronts were directed from Moscow, by the Stavka. The fact that he had acted as Commander-in-Chief was only revealed by Vasilyevskiy after the advance into Manchuria at the end of the war.

The High Command of the Far Eastern Strategic Direction was not abolished at the end of the war and no official instructions for its disbandment were ever issued. All that happened was that from 1953 onwards all official mention of it ceased. Does it exist today? Do High Commands exist for other Strategic Directions or would they be set up only in the event of war?

They exist--and they are in operation. They are not mentioned officially, but no particular efforts are made to conceal their existence. Let us identify them. This is quite simple. In the Soviet Army there are sixteen Military Districts and four Army Groups. The senior officer in each District and each Army Group has the designation 'Commander'. Only in one case, that of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, is he given the title of 'Commander-in-Chief'. In the event of war most Districts would be made into Fronts. But Fronts, too, are headed only by 'Commanders'. The title 'Commander-in-Chief' is considerably senior to 'Commander of a Front'. In a war the number of troops available would increase many times over. Platoon commanders would take over companies, battalion commanders would head regiments and regimental commanders would become divisional commanders. In this situation every officer might receive a higher rank; he would certainly retain the one he already holds. A general who in peacetime commands enough troops to be entitled to the designation 'Commander-in-Chief' can hardly have his responsibilities reduced to those of a Front Commander at a time when many more troops are being placed under his command. If during peacetime the importance of his post is so great, how can it diminish when war breaks out? Of course it cannot. And a general whose peacetime title is 'Commander-in-Chief of the GSFG' will retain this rank, which is considerably higher than that of Front Commander.

There can be no doubt that the organisation known as the 'Headquarters of the GSFG' in peacetime would become, not a Front Headquarters, but the Headquarters of the Western Strategic Direction.

It is significant that, already in peacetime, the Headquarters of the GSFG controls two Tank Armies and one Shock Army (essentially another Tank Army). For each Front can have only a single Tank Army and in many cases it does not have one at all. The presence in GSFG of three Tank Armies indicates that it has been decided to deploy at least three Fronts in the area covered by this Direction. Is this sufficient? Yes, for in a war the Commander-in-Chief of the Western Strategic Direction would have under his command not only all the Soviet troops in East Germany but all those in Czechoslovakia and Poland, together with the entire complement of the German, Czech and Polish armed forces, the Soviet Baltic Fleet and the Byelorussian Military District. This will be discussed in greater detail. For the present it is sufficient to note that the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany is an organisation which is regarded by the Soviet leadership as entirely different from any other Group of forces. No other force--in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Mongolia, Cuba, Afghanistan or, earlier, Austria or China--has ever been headed by a Commander-in-Chief. All these Groups were headed by a Commander.

Let us list the Generals and Marshals who have held the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Group of Forces in Germany:

Marshal G. K. Zhukov, the former Chief of the General Staff, who became First Deputy to the Supreme Commander and subsequently Minister of Defence and a

member of the Politburo, the only man in history to have been awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union four times.

Marshal V. D. Sokolovskiy, former Chief of Staff of the Western Strategic Direction and later Chief of the General Staff.

General of the Army V. I. Chuykov, subsequently a Marshal and Commander-in-Chief of the Land Forces.

Marshal A. A. Grechko, later Minister of Defence and a member of the Politburo.

Marshal M. V. Zakharov, later Chief of the General Staff.

Marshal P. K. Koshevoy.

General of the Army V. G. Kulikov, later a Marshal, Chief of the General Staff and then Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation.

Only one of this galaxy rose no higher--Marshal Koshevoy, who became seriously ill. But to reach the rank of Marshal is no mean achievement--and it was in Germany that he received the rank of Marshal, at a time when other Groups of forces were commanded only by Lieutenant-Generals and Colonel-Generals. Thus Koshevoy, too, stands out from the crowd.

One rule applied to all--anyone who held the post of Commander-in-Chief of the GSFG was either a Marshal already, was promoted to this rank on appointment or was given it shortly afterwards. Nothing of this sort has occurred with other Groups of forces.

The GSFG is a kind of springboard to the very highest military appointments. Commanders of other groups have never achieved such high standing. Moreover even the Commanders-in-Chief of the Land Forces, of the Air Forces, Fleet, Rocket Troops or Air Defence have never had such glittering careers or such future prospects as those who have been Commanders-in-Chief in Germany.

Surely this is enough to indicate that in wartime something far more powerful will be set up on the foundation represented by the GSFG than in the other, ordinary, Military Districts and Groups of forces?

None of the other Military Districts and Groups of forces have Commanders-in-Chief--only Commanders. Does this mean that in peacetime there are no Strategic Directions? Not at all. The Headquarters of the Western Strategic Direction (HQ, GSFG) is hardly concealed at all while the existence of the other Strategic Directions is only lightly camouflaged, as was 'Colonel-General Vasilyev's Group'. But it is easy to see through this camouflage.

It is sufficient to analyse the careers of those commanding Military Districts. One can then see that, for the overwhelming majority, command of a District represents the highest peak they will reach. Those who advance further are rare. In some cases what follows is honourable retirement to posts such as Director of one Military Academy or another or an Inspector's post in the Ministry of Defence. Both these types of appointment are seen as 'elephants' graveyards'. They represent, in fact, the end of any real power.

However one of the sixteen Military Districts is a clear exception. None of its former Commanders has ever left for an elephants' graveyard. On the contrary--the Kiev Military District is a kind of doorway to power. Here are the careers of all those who have commanded this District since the war:

Colonel-General A. A. Grechko became Commander-in-Chief of GSFG and a Marshal, Commander-in-Chief of Land Forces, Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, Minister of Defence and a member of the Politburo.

General of the Army V. I. Chuykov--C-in-C GSFG, Commander, Kiev Military District, Marshal, C-in-C of Land Forces and Deputy Minister of Defence.

Colonel-General P. K. Koshevoy--First Deputy to the C-in-C GSFG, Commander, Kiev Military District and General of the Army, C-in-C GSFG, and Marshal.

General of the Army I. I. Yakubovskiy--C-in-C GSFG, Commander, Kiev Military District, C-in-C of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation and Marshal.

Colonel-General V. G. Kulikov--Commander Kiev Military District, C-in-C GSFG and General of the Army, Chief of the General Staff, C-in-C of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation and Marshal.

Colonel-General G. I. Salmanov--Commander Kiev Military District, Commander of the Trans-Baykal Military District.

Surprisingly, as we have been following the brilliant careers of the Commanders of the Kiev Military District, we have come across some old friends, whom we met previously as C-in-C GSFG. Strangely, there has been an interchange of Generals between Wünsdorf and Kiev. Those who have gone to Kiev have later gone to GSFG. Those who have reached GSFG without going to Kiev have done so later. However, a Commander of the Kiev Military District does not see himself as junior to the C-in-C GSFG. The journey from GSFG to Kiev is not demotion and for many it has represented promotion. Chuykov, for instance, was C-in-C GSFG as a General and was made a Marshal when he moved to Kiev.

But perhaps the Kiev Military District is of greater numerical strength than the others? Not at all--Byelorussia has more troops and the Far Eastern Military District has more than both the Kievan and Byelorussian put together. In territory Kiev is one of the smallest of the Districts. The Siberian District is sixty-seven times as large and Moscow District is far more important. But the Commander of the Moscow, Siberian, Far Eastern, Byelorussian and the other Military Districts cannot even dream of the prospects which stretch before Commanders in Kiev. In the last twenty years not one of the Commanders of Moscow District has become a Marshal, while all but one of those from Kiev have done so, the exception being the most recent who is still young and who will certainly soon be promoted.

Why is there such a sharp contrast between the Kievan and the fifteen other Districts? Simply because the organisation designated Headquarters Kiev Military District is in fact the Headquarters of the South-Western Strategic Direction, which in the event of war would take control not only of the troops already on its territory, but of those in Sub-Carpathia, Hungary (both Soviet and Hungarian) and also the entire armed forces of Romania and Bulgaria, with their fleets, and, finally, the Black Sea Fleet.

While relations with China were good there were only two High Commands of Strategic Directions--the Western and the South-Western--but as soon as the relationship deteriorated the Far Eastern Strategic Direction was reestablished. It encompasses the Central Asian, Siberian, Trans-Baykal and Far Eastern Military Districts, part of the Pacific Fleet and the Mongolian armed forces. In peacetime the Headquarters of this Strategic Direction is merged with that of the Trans-Baykal Military District and is located in Chita. Clearly this is a most convenient location, occupying, as it does, a central position among the Military Districts bordering on China and protected by the buffer state of Mongolia.

Part Two

Types of Armed Services

How the Red Army is divided in relation to its targets

Over the centuries, the armed forces of most countries have traditionally been divided between land armies and fleets. In the twentieth century the third category of air forces was added. Each of the armed services is divided into different arms of service. Thousands of years ago, land forces were already divided into infantry and cavalry. Much later, artillery detachments were added, these were eventually joined by tank forces, and so the process continued.

Today's Red Army consists, unlike any other in the world, not of three, but of five different Armed Services:

- The Strategic Rocket Forces
- The Land Forces
- The Air Defence Forces
- The Air Forces
- The Navy

Each of these Services, with the exception of the Strategic Rocket Forces, is made up of different arms of service. In the Land Forces there are seven, in the Air Defence Forces three, in the Air Forces three, and in the Navy six. The Airborne Forces constitute a separate arm of service, which is not part of the complement of any of the main Services.

In addition to these Services and their constituent arms of service, there are supporting arms of service--engineers, communications, chemical warfare and transport troops and others--which form part of the different Services and their component arms. In addition there are other services which support the operations of the whole Red Army. There are fifteen or so of these but we will examine only the most important: military intelligence and the disinformation service.

At the head of each of the Armed Services is a Commander-in-Chief. The standing of these Commanders-in-Chief varies. Three of them--those in command of the Land Forces, the Air Force, and the Navy--are no more than administrative heads. They are responsible for the improvement and development of their Services, and for ensuring that these are up to strength and properly equipped. Two of the others--the Commanders-in-Chief of the Rocket Forces and of the Air Defence Forces--are responsible not only for administrative questions but also for the operational control of their forces in action.

The discrepancy in the positions of Commanders-in-Chief results from the fact that, in combat, the Rocket Forces operate independently, without needing to work with any other Service. In the same way, the Air Defence Forces operate in complete independence. The Commanders-in-Chief of these two Services are subordinated directly to the Supreme Commander and are fully responsible for their forces both in peacetime and in war.

With the Land Forces, Air Forces and Navy the situation is more complex. In their operations they need to cooperate constantly and closely. If any of these three should decide to take independent action, the results would be catastrophic. For this reason the Commanders-in-Chief of these 'traditional' Services are deliberately denied the

right to direct their own forces in war. Their task is to supervise all aspects of the development and equipment of their Services.

Since the Land Forces, Air Forces and Navy can only operate in close conjunction, combined command structures have been devised to control them independently of their Commanders-in-Chief. We have already encountered these combined structures--they are the Fronts, which contain elements from both Land and Air Armies, and the Strategic Directions which incorporate Fronts and Fleets.

The establishment of these combined command structures and of systems of combat control, which are not subordinated to individual Commanders-in-Chief, has made it possible to solve most of the problems which result from the rivalry which has existed between the Services for centuries.

Let us take the case of a Soviet general who is slowly climbing the rungs of his professional ladder. First he commands a motor-rifle division, then he becomes deputy to the Commander of a Tank Army (it is normal practice to move officers from motor-rifle forces to tank forces and vice versa) and next he becomes an Army Commander. Until now he has always been a fierce champion of the interests of the Land Forces, which he supports fervently. So far, though, his position has been too lowly for his views to be heard by anyone outside the Land Forces. But now he rises a little higher and becomes Commander of a Front. He now has both an operational task, for the fulfilment of which his head is at stake, and the forces with which to carry it out--three or four Land Armies and one Air Army. The Commander-in-Chief of Land Forces supplies his Land Armies with all they require, the Commander-in-Chief of Air Forces does the same for his Air Army. But it is the Front Commander who is responsible for deciding how to use these forces in combat. In this situation every Front Commander forgets, as soon as he takes over his high post, that he is an infantry or a tank general. He has to carry out his operational task and for this all his Armies--Land and Air--must be appropriately prepared and supplied. If the Air Army is worse prepared and supplied than the All-Arms and Tank Armies, the Front Commander will either immediately take steps himself to restore the balance or will call on his superiors to do this. There are sixteen Front Commanders in all. All of them are products of the Land Forces, for these provide the basic strength of each Front, but they are in no way subordinate to the Commander-in-Chief of Land Forces in questions concerning the use of their resources. It is the Front Commanders who have the task of directing their forces to victory. For this reason, if the Land Forces were to be increased at the expense of the Air Forces, all the Front Commanders would protest immediately and sharply, despite their own upbringing in the Land Forces.

If our general should climb still higher and become Commander-in-Chief of a Strategic Direction, he will have a Fleet under his control, as well as four Fronts, each of which contains a mixture of Land Forces and Air Forces.

In wartime he will be responsible for combat operations covering huge areas and he is already concerned, in peacetime, to ensure that all the forces under his command develop proportionately and in balance with one another. In this way yesterday's tank officer becomes an ardent champion of the development not only of the Land Forces but of the Air Forces and the Navy.

The Armed Services consist of arms of service. At the head of each arm of service is a Commander. However in most cases the latter has purely administrative functions. For instance, the Commander-in-Chief of Land Forces has as one of his subordinates the Commander of Tank Forces. But tens of thousands of tanks are spread throughout the world, from Cuba to Sakhalin. Every reconnaissance battalion has a tank platoon,

every motor-rifle regiment has a tank battalion, every motor-rifle division has a tank regiment, every Army a tank division, every Front a Tank Army, and each Strategic Direction has a Group of Tank Armies. Naturally, decisions on the use of all these tanks in combat are taken by the combat commanders as the situation develops. The Commander of Tank Forces is in no position to play any part in the control of each tank unit, and any such intervention would be a violation of the principle of sole responsibility for the conduct and results of combat operations. For this reason, the Commander of Tank Forces is strictly forbidden to intervene in combat planning and in questions of the use of tanks in combat. His responsibilities cover the development of new types of tank and their testing, the supervision of the quality of production of tank factories, ensuring that all tank detachments are supplied with the necessary spare parts and the training of specialists in the Tank Force Academies, in the five Tank High Schools and in training divisions. He is also responsible for the technical condition of tanks in all the armed forces and acts as the inspector of all tank personnel.

The Commander of the Rocket Forces and Artillery of the Land Forces, the Commander of the Air Defence of Land Forces, the Commander of Fleet Aviation and Commanders of other arms of service have similar administrative roles.

However there are exceptions to this rule. It is possible that some arms of service may be totally (or almost totally) deployed in a single direction. The Commanders of these arms of service have both administrative and combat roles. These arms of service include the Air Forces' Long-Range (strategic missile-carrying) Aviation and Military Transport Aviation and the Airborne Forces. In wartime, and on questions concerning the use of their forces, the Commanders of these arms of service are subordinated directly to the Stavka.

The Strategic Rocket Forces

1

The Strategic Rocket Forces (SRF) are the newest and the smallest of the five Armed Services which make up the Soviet Army. They are also the most important component of that Army.

The SRF was established as an independent Service in December 1959. At its head is a Commander-in-Chief with the title of Marshal of the Soviet Union. Under his command are three Rocket Armies, three independent Rocket Corps, ten to twelve Rocket divisions, three sizeable rocket ranges and a large number of scientific research and teaching establishments. The total strength of the SRF is about half a million.

The SRF is both an operational and an administrative organisation. In peacetime its Commander-in-Chief is responsible to the Minister of Defence on all administrative questions and to the Politburo on all aspects of the operational use of rockets. In wartime the SRF would be controlled by the Defence Council, through the Supreme Commander. A final decision on the mass use of strategic rockets would be made by the Defence Council--i.e. the Politburo.

A Rocket Army consists of ten divisions. A division is made up of ten regiments and a technical base. A rocket regiment may have from one to ten launchers, depending on the type of rocket with which it is equipped. A strategic rocket regiment is the smallest in size of any in the Soviet Army. Its fighting strength is between 250 and 400 men, depending on the type of rocket with which it is equipped. Its basic tasks

are to maintain the rockets, to safeguard and defend them and to launch them. Organisationally, a rocket regiment consists of the commander, his staff, five duty launch teams, an emergency repair battery and a guard company. This sub-unit is dignified with the title of regiment solely because of the very great responsibility which its officers bear.

Each regiment has an underground command post in which there is always a duty team of officers with direct communication links with the divisional commander, the Army commander, the commander-in-chief of the SRF and the Central command post. If this underground post goes out of action, the commander of the regiment immediately deploys a mobile control point working from motor vehicles. In a threatening situation two teams are on duty simultaneously--one in the underground command post and the other at a mobile one--so that either could take over the firing of all the regiment's rockets.

According to the situation, the duty teams at command posts are changed either every week or every month.

If a launcher is damaged, it is dismantled by the regiment's emergency repair battery. The guard company is responsible for the protection of the command posts and of the launchers. A large proportion of the regiment's personnel are involved in guard duties. Not one of them will have seen a rocket or know anything about one. Their job is to guard snow-covered clearings in pine forests, clearings which are surrounded by dozens of rows of barbed wire and defended by minefields. The guard company of a rocket regiment has fifty or so guard dogs.

The principal task of a rocket division is the technical supply of its regiments. For this, a divisional commander has under him a sub-unit known as a technical base, which has a complement of 3,000-4,000 and is commanded by a colonel. The technical base carries out the transport, maintenance, replacement, repair and servicing of the regiment's rockets.

The strength of a rocket division is 7,000-8,000.

The headquarters of each Rocket Army is responsible for coordination of the operations of its divisions, which will be deployed throughout a very large area. In a critical situation, the headquarters of a Rocket Army may make use of flying command posts to direct the firing of the rockets of regiments and divisions whose command posts have been put out of action. The independent Rocket Corps are organised by the Rocket Armies, except that they have three or four rather than ten divisions. They are also armed with comparatively short-range rockets (3,000-6,000 kilometres), some of which are fired from mobile rather than from fixed underground launchers.

The existence of the rocket corps is due to the fact that while the three Rocket Armies come under the exclusive control of the Supreme Commander, they are needed to support the forces of the three main Strategic Directions and are at the disposal of the Commanders-in-Chief of these Directions. A whole Corps, or some of its divisions, can be used in support of advancing forces in any of the Directions.

Separate rocket divisions, subordinated directly to the Commander-in-Chief of the SRF, form his operational reserve. Some of these divisions are equipped with particularly powerful rockets. The rest have standard rockets and can be moved to any part of the Soviet Union, in order to reduce their vulnerability.

2

The Strategic Rocket Forces have a much revered father figure. If he did not exist neither would the SRF. His name is Fidel Castro: you may smile, but the SRF does not.

The story behind this is as follows. In 1959 Castro and his comrades seized power in Cuba. No one in Washington was alarmed by this and no reaction came from

Moscow; it was seen as a routine Latin American coup-d'état. However it was not long before Washington became uneasy and Moscow began to show interest. The Kremlin saw an unexpected chance to loosen the hold of its hated enemy, capitalism, on the Western hemisphere. This was obviously an excellent opportunity but one which it seemed impossible to exploit because of lack of strength on the spot. Hitherto, the Soviet Union had been able to support allies of this sort with tanks. But how could it help Fidel Castro at the other side of an ocean? At that time the Soviet Fleet could not dream of trying to take on the US Navy, particularly on the latter's own doorstep. Strategic aircraft existed but only for parades and demonstrations of strength. How could the United States be dissuaded from stepping in?

There was a simple, brilliant solution--bluff.

It was decided to make use of a weapon which had not yet come into service--what Goebbels would have called a 'miracle weapon'. For a miracle weapon was what the Politburo employed. Throughout 1959 there were top-priority firings of Soviet rockets and persistent rumours of extraordinary successes. In December rumours began to circulate about new, top-secret forces which were all-powerful, highly accurate, invulnerable, indestructible and so forth. These rumours were supported by the appointment of Marshal of Artillery M. I. Nedelin to a highly important position of some sort, with promotion to Chief Marshal of Artillery. In January 1960 Khrushchev announced the formation of the Strategic Rocket Forces, with Nedelin at their head. He followed this with claims that nothing would be able to withstand these forces, that they could reach any point on the globe, etc. Talking to journalists, Khrushchev revealed 'in confidence' that he had been to a factory where he had seen rockets 'tumbling off the conveyor belts, just like sausages'. (Incidentally, then, as now, the supply of sausages was presenting the USSR with acute problems.) The West, unaccustomed to dealing with so high-level a charlatan, was duly impressed and consequently there was no invasion of Cuba. During the drama which took place, Khrushchev took to making fierce threats about 'pressing the button'.

At the moment when the establishment of the SRF was announced, a Force equal in standing to the Land Forces and said to far exceed the latter in striking power, at the moment when Marshal Nedelin's headquarters was established, with great show, the Soviet rocket forces consisted of four regiments armed with 8-Zh-38 rockets (copies of the German V.2) and one range, on which experiments with new Soviet rockets were being carried out. The figures for rocket production were negligible. All the rockets that were made were immediately used for demonstrations in space while the newly-formed divisions received nothing but replicas, which were shown off at parades and in films. Empty dummies, resembling rockets, were splendidly designated 'dimensional substitutes'. Meanwhile, a hectic race was in progress to produce real, operational rockets. Accidents occurred, one after another. On 24 October, 1960, when an experimental 8-K-63 rocket blew up, the Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Rocket Forces, Chief Marshal Nedelin, and his entire staff were burned alive ...

However, the SRF had won its first battle, the battle for Cuba.

3

As time passed, the SRF became able to stand on its own feet. But the bluff continues. The American armed forces refer modestly to fifty intercontinental ballistic missiles as a Squadron. The Soviet Army builds at least five Regiments around this number of missiles. Alternately if the rockets are obsolescent they may form a Rocket Division or even a Rocket Corps. The Americans do not classify a thousand rockets as a separate Service, or even as an individual arm of service. They are just part of the US Air Force's Strategic Air Command. In the USSR fifteen hundred rockets make up a

complete Service, commanded by a Marshal of the Soviet Union. At present, the Americans are armed, essentially, with a single type of intercontinental rocket, the 'Minuteman'. In the Soviet Union there are more than ten different types, amounting to approximately the same total as the Americans possess. Why this lack of coordination? Because not one of them is of really good quality. Some lack accuracy, and have too low a payload, and too short a range, but they are kept in service because they are more reliable than other types. Others are retained because their accuracy is more or less acceptable. Others are neither accurate nor reliable but have a good range. But there is one other reason for this untidy situation, for this multiplicity of types. The fact is that the rocket forces have been developed piecemeal, like a patchwork quilt. Soviet industry is unable to turn out long production runs of rockets quickly. For this reason, while the factories are familiarising themselves with the manufacture of one type and beginning slowly to produce it, another type is being brought just as slowly into service. Familiarisation with this new type starts, in a dilatory way, and a small production run begins, with equal lack of haste, and thus, year by year, the Rocket Forces expand, gradually and in leisurely fashion. Often a really good rocket can only be produced in small numbers because the United States will only sell a small quantity of the parts needed for it. For example, if the Americans only sell seventy-nine precision fuel filters, the Soviets will be unable to produce more than this number of rockets. Some of these will be allocated for experimental use and the number available for operational deployment therefore becomes smaller still. It is then necessary to design a new rocket without high-precision filters but with electronic equipment to control the ignition process. But then, perhaps, it is only possible to purchase two hundred sets of this electronic equipment from the US. A first-class rocket, but no more than two hundred can be produced...

4

The SRF faces another, even more critical problem--its hunger for uranium. The shortage of uranium and plutonium has led the Soviet Union to produce extremely high-powered thermonuclear warheads with a TNT equivalent of scores of megatons. One of the reasons for this was the poor accuracy of the rockets; in order to offset this it became necessary to increase drastically the yield of the warheads. But this was not the most important consideration. The fundamental reason was that a thermonuclear charge, whatever its yield, needs only one nuclear detonator. The shortage of uranium and plutonium made it necessary to produce a comparatively small quantity of thermonuclear warheads and to compensate for this by increasing their yield.

The Soviet Union has put a lot of work into the problem of producing a thermonuclear warhead in which reaction is brought about not by a nuclear detonator but by some other means--for instance, by the simultaneous explosion of a large number of hollow charges. This is very difficult to achieve, for if just one charge functions a thousandth of a second early, it will scatter all the others. American electronic equipment is needed to solve the problem high precision timers, which will deliver impulses to all the charges simultaneously. There are some grounds for believing that timers of this sort may be sold to the Soviet Union and, if this happens, the SRF will acquire titanic strength. Meanwhile, not all Soviet rockets have warheads. There are not enough for every rocket, so that, at present, use is being made of radioactive material which is, quite simply, waste produced by nuclear power stations--radioactive dust. Rather than launch a rocket without a warhead, the wretched thing might as well be used to scatter dust in the enemy's eyes... Naturally, scattering small quantities of dust over wide areas of enemy territory, even if it is

highly radioactive, will not do much damage and it will certainly not decide the outcome of a war. But what can one do if one has nothing better?

However, naturally, the SRF must not be underestimated. Rapid technical progress is being made and Soviet engineers are skilfully steering a course between the technological icebergs which confront them, sometimes achieving astounding successes, brilliant in their simplicity.

The technical balance could change very quickly, if the West does not press forward with the development of its own equipment as quickly and as decisively as the Soviet Union is doing.

The National Air Defence Forces

1

The National Air Defence Forces (ADF) are the third most important of the five Services which make up the Soviet Armed Forces, after the Strategic Rocket Forces and the Land Forces. However, we will examine them at this point, directly after the SRF, since like the latter they represent not simply an administrative structure but a unified, controlled combat organisation, subordinated directly to the Supreme Commander. Because they form a unified combat organisation, the ADF are always commanded by a Marshal of the Soviet Union. The Land Forces, which are five times the size of the ADF, and which represent the striking force of the Soviet Union in Europe, are headed only by a General of the Army.

2

In the armed forces of any other country, responsibility for air defence is laid upon its air forces. In the Soviet Union, the air defence system was so highly developed that it would be quite impossible to confine it within the organisational structure of the Air Forces. Moreover, the ADF are the third most important Service while the Air Forces occupy fourth place.

The independence of the ADF from the Air Forces is due not only to their size and to their technical development, but also to the overall Soviet philosophy concerning the allocation of wartime roles. In any country in which Soviet specialists are given the task of setting up or restructuring the armed forces, they establish several parallel systems of air defence. One is a static system, designed to defend the territory of the country and the most important administrative, political, economic and transport installations which it contains. This is a copy of the ADF. In addition, separate systems for self-defence and protection against air attack are set up in the land forces, the navy and the air force.

While the national defence system is static, those of the different armed services are mobile, designed to move alongside the forces which they exist to protect. If several systems find themselves operating in the same area, they work with one another and in such a case their collaboration is always organised by the national system.

3

The division of the ADF into a national system and another system for the protection of the armed services, took place long before the Second World War. All

anti-aircraft artillery and all searchlight and sound-ranging units were divided between those under the command of army and naval commanders and those covering the most important civil installations, which are not subordinated to army commanders but had their own control apparatus. The fighter aircraft available were divided in the same way. In 1939, for instance, forty air regiments (1,640 combat aircraft) were transferred from the strength of the Air Forces to that of the ADF, for both administrative and combat purposes. Mixed ADF units were formed from the anti-aircraft artillery, searchlight and air sub-units, which succeeded in cooperating very closely with one another.

During the war the ADF completed their development into a separate, independent constituent of the Armed Forces, on an equal footing with the Land Forces, the Air Forces and the Navy. During the war, too, the development of fighter aircraft designed specifically for either the Air Forces or the ADF was begun. Flying training schools were set up to train ADF pilots, using different teaching programmes from those of the Air Forces. Subsequently, anti-aircraft gunnery schools were established, some of which trained officers for anti-aircraft units of the Land Forces and Navy while others prepared officers for the anti-aircraft units of the ADF. After the war, the teams designing anti-aircraft guns for the Armed Forces were directed to develop especially powerful anti-aircraft guns for the ADF.

At the end of the war the total strength of the ADF was more than one million, divided into four ADF fronts (each with two or three armies) and three independent ADF Armies.

After the war the ADF was given official status as an independent Armed Service.

4

Today the ADF has more than 600,000 men. For administrative purposes they are divided into three arms of service:

- ADF Fighter Aviation
- ADF Surface-to-air Missile Forces
- ADF Radar Forces

For greater efficiency and closer cooperation, the sub-units of these three arms of service are brought together to form mixed units--ADF Divisions, Corps, Armies and Fronts (in peacetime Fronts are known as ADF Districts).

The fact that 3,000 combat aircraft, among them some of the most advanced, have no operational, financial, administrative or any other connection with the Air Forces, has not been grasped by ordinary individuals in the West, nor even by Western military specialists. It is therefore necessary to repeat, that the ADF rate as a separate and independent Armed Service, with 3,000 supersonic interceptor aircraft, 12,000 anti-aircraft missile launchers and 6,000 radar installations.

It is because the ADF are responsible both for the protection of Soviet territory and of the most important installations in the USSR that they function independently. Since they are concerned mainly with the defence of stationary targets, the fighter aircraft developed for them differ from those with which the Air Forces are equipped. The ADF are also equipped with surface-to-air missiles and radar installations which differ from those used by the Land Forces and by the Navy.

The Air Forces have their own fighter aircraft, totalling several thousand. The Land Forces have thousands of their own anti-aircraft missile launchers, anti-aircraft guns and radar installations. The Navy, too, has its own fighters, anti-aircraft missiles and guns and radar, and all of these belong to the individual Armed Service rather than to

the ADF, and are used to meet the requirements of the operational commanders of the Land Forces, Air Forces and Navy. We will discuss these independent air defence systems later; for the moment we will confine ourselves to the national defence system.

5

The fighter aircraft of the ADF are organised as regiments. In all, the ADF has more than seventy regiments, each with forty aircraft.

The ADF cannot, of course, use fighter aircraft built for the Air Forces, any more than the latter can use aircraft built to the designs of the ADF. The Air Forces and the ADF operate under entirely different conditions and have different operational tasks and each Service therefore has its particular requirements from its own aircraft.

The ADF operates from permanent airfields and can therefore use heavy fighter aircraft. The fighter aircraft of the Air Forces are constantly on the move behind the Land Forces and must therefore operate from very poor airfields, sometimes with grass runways or even from sections of road. They are therefore much lighter than the aircraft used by the ADF.

ADF fighters are assisted in their operations by extremely powerful radar and guidance systems, which direct the aircraft to their targets from the ground. These aircraft do not therefore need to be highly manoeuvrable but every effort is made to increase their speed, their operational ceiling and range. The Air Forces require different qualities from their fighter aircraft, which are lighter, since they have to operate in constantly changing situations, and from their pilots, who have to work unassisted, locating and attacking their targets for themselves. The Air Force fighters therefore need to be both light and highly manoeuvrable but they are considerably inferior to those of the ADF in speed, range, payload and ceiling.

Let us look at an example of these two different approaches to the design of fighter aircraft. The MIG-23 is extremely light and manoeuvrable and is able to operate from any airfield, including those with grass runways. Clearly, it is an aircraft for the Air Forces. By contrast, the MIG-25, although designed by the same group, at the same time, is extremely heavy and unmanoeuvrable and can operate only from long and very stable concrete runways, but it has gained twelve world records for range, speed, rate of climb and altitude reached. For two decades this was the fastest operational aircraft in the world. It is easy to see that this is an ADF fighter.

Besides the MIG-25, which is a high-altitude interceptor, the ADF have a low-level interceptor, the SU 15, and a long-range interceptor, the TU 128, which is designed to attack enemy aircraft attempting to penetrate Soviet air space across the endless wastes of the Arctic or the deserts of Central Asia.

The *Surface-to-air Missile (SAM) Forces of the ADF* consist, organisationally, of rocket brigades (each with 10 to 12 launch battalions), regiments (3 to 5 launch battalions) and independent launch battalions. Each battalion has 6 to 8 launchers, according to the type of rocket with which it is equipped. Each battalion has between 80 and 120 men. First, all battalions were equipped with S 75 rockets. Then, to replace these, two rockets, the S 125 (low-altitude and short-range) and the S 200 (high-altitude and long-range), were developed. The S 200 can be fitted with a nuclear warhead to destroy enemy rockets or aircraft. Also introduced, to destroy the enemy's inter-continental ballistic missiles, was the UR 100, which has a particularly powerful warhead, but the deployment of this type has been limited by the US-Soviet ABM Treaty.

Each SAM battalion is equipped with several anti-aircraft guns of small (23mm) and large (57mm) calibre. These are used to repel either low-flying enemy aircraft or

attacks by enemy land forces. In peacetime, these anti-aircraft guns are not classified as a separate arm of service of the ADF. However, in wartime, when the strength of the ADF would be increased three or four times, they would form an arm of service, deployed as anti-aircraft artillery regiments and divisions, equipped with 23, 57, 85, 100 and 130mm guns, which are mothballed in peacetime.

The Radar Forces of the ADF consist of brigades and regiments, together with a number of independent battalions and companies. They are equipped with several thousand radar installations, for the detection of enemy aircraft and space weapons and for the guidance towards these targets of ADF robot and interceptor aircraft.

In addition to these three main arms of service, the complement of the ADF includes many supporting sub-units (providing transport, communications, guard duties and administration), two military academies and eleven higher officers' schools, together with a considerable number of test-ranges, institutes for scientific research and training centres.

6

Operationally the ADF consists of a Central Command Post, two ADF Districts, which would become ADF Fronts in wartime, eight independent ADF Armies and several independent ADF Corps.

Up to regimental and brigade level ADF formations are drawn from a single arm of service--for example from SAM brigades, fighter regiments, independent radar battalions, etc. From division level upwards, each arm of service is represented in each formation and these are therefore called ADF Divisions, Corps, etc.

The organisation of each division, corps or other higher formation is decided in accordance with the importance of the installation which it is protecting. However, there is one guiding principle: each commander is responsible for the defence of one key point only. This principle is uniformly applied at all levels.

The commander of an ADF division is responsible for the protection of a single, highly important installation, for instance, of a large power-supply centre. He is also required to prevent incursions by enemy aircraft over his sector. The division therefore deploys one SAM brigade to cover the main installation, and moves two or three SAM regiments into the-areas most likely to be threatened, ahead of the brigades, and a number of independent SAM battalions into areas which are in less danger. In addition, the divisional commander has one air regiment which may be used to make contact with the enemy at a considerable distance, for operations at boundaries or junctions not covered by SAM fire, or in the area in which the enemy delivers his main thrust. The operations of the SAM sub-units and of the interceptor aircraft are supported by radar battalions and companies which are subordinated both to the divisional commander himself and to the commanding officers of the division's SAM units.

An ADF corps commander organises coverage of the target he is protecting in precisely the same way. To protect the main installation itself he has one ADF division. Both he and his divisional commander are involved in the defence of the same installation. Two or three SAM brigades are moved forward to cover the sectors which are under greatest threat, while SAM regiments are deployed in less endangered areas. One air regiment is under the direct command of the corps commander, for long-range use or for operations in the area in which the enemy delivers his main attack. If the SAM sub-units are put out of action, the corps commander can at any time make use of his fighter regiment to cover an area in which a breakthrough is threatened. Thus there are two air regiments with each ADF Corps, one at the disposal of the ADF divisional commander, the other for use by the corps commander.

A corps contains three or four SAM brigades, one with the ADF division, the others at the disposal of the corps commander, covering the approaches to the divisional position. In a corps there are five or six SAM regiments, two or three of which are used in the division's main sector, the remainder in the secondary sectors of the corps area. Lastly, the corps commander himself has a radar regiment, in addition to the radar forces of his subordinates.

An ADF Army commander, too, is responsible for the protection of a single key objective and has an ADF corps to cover it. In addition, an Army has two or three independent ADF divisions, each of which provides cover for its own key installation and also defends the main approaches to the key objective guarded by the Army. Independent SAM brigades are deployed in the secondary sectors of the Army's area. An Army commander also has two air regiments (one with aircraft for high-altitude operations, the other with long-range interceptors) and his own radar installations (including over-the-horizon radars).

An ADF District is similar in structure. The key objective is covered by an Army. Two or three independent ADF corps are deployed in the sectors under greatest threat while the less endangered areas are covered by ADF divisions, each of which, of course, has a key objective of its own. The District Commander also has two interceptor air regiments under his command and radar detection facilities, including very large aircraft equipped with powerful radars.

The nerve centre--Moscow--is, of course, covered by an ADF District; the main approaches to this District by ADF Armies and the secondary sectors by ADF corps. Each District and Army has, of course, the task of covering a key installation of its own.

The ADF contains two ADF Districts. Something must be said about the reasons for the existence of the second of these--the Baku District. Unlike the Moscow District, the Baku ADF District does not have a key target to protect. The fact that Baku produces oil is irrelevant: twenty-four times as much oil is produced in the Tatarstan area as in Baku. The Baku ADF District looks southwards, covering a huge area along the frontiers, which is unlikely to be attacked. Several of the armies of the ADF (the 9th, for instance), have considerably greater combat resources than the whole Baku District. It is, however, because of the need to watch such a huge area, a task for which an ADF Army has insufficient capacity, that a District was established there.

All in all, the ADF is the most powerful system of its sort in the world. It has at its disposal not only the largest quantity of equipment but in some respects the best equipment in the world. At the beginning of the 1980s the MIG-25 interceptor was the fastest in the world and the S-200 had the largest yield and the greatest range of any surface-to-air missile. In the period since the war the Soviet Air Defence Forces have shown their strength on many occasions. They did this most strikingly on 1 May, 1960, by shooting down an American U-2 reconnaissance aircraft, a type regarded until then as invulnerable, because of the incredible height at which it could operate. There is no doubt that the Soviet Air Defence Forces are the most experienced in the world. What other system can boast of having spent as many years fighting the most modern air force in the world as the Soviet ADF system in Vietnam?

In the mid-1970s some doubt arose as to its reliability when a South Korean aircraft lost its way and flew over Soviet Arctic territory for some considerable time before being forced down by a Soviet SU-15 interceptor. However, the reasons for this delay can be fully explained; we have noted that interceptor aircraft do not represent the main strength of the ADF, which lies in its surface-to-air missiles. The territory across which the lost aircraft flew was quite unusually well-equipped with SAMs, but there is simply no reason to use them against a civil aircraft. At the same time, because of the deep snow which lay in the area, hardly any interceptors were

stationed there. Their absence was compensated for by an abnormally large number of SAMs, ready to shoot down any military aircraft. In this unusual situation, once the invader had been found to be a civil aircraft, it became necessary to use an interceptor brought from a great distance. This aircraft took off from Lodeynoye Polye and flew more than 1,000 kilometres, in darkness, to meet the intruder. In an operational situation it would not have been necessary to do this. It would be simpler to use a rocket.

Nevertheless, despite everything, the ADF has its Achilles heel. The fastest aircraft are flown by men who detest socialism with all their hearts. The pilot Byelenko is by no means unique in the ADF.

The Land Forces

1

The Land Forces are the oldest, the largest and the most diversified of the Services making up the Armed Forces of the Red Army. In peacetime their strength totals approximately 2 million, but mobilisation would bring them up to between 21 and 23 million within ten days.

They contain seven arms of service:

- Motor-rifle Troops
- Tank Troops
- Artillery and Rocket Troops of the Land Forces
- Air Defence Troops of the Land Forces
- Airborne Assault Troops
- Diversionary Troops (Spetsnaz)
- Fortified Area Troops

The existence of the last three is kept secret.

In their organisation and operational strength, the Land Forces can be seen as a scaled-down model of the entire Soviet Armed Forces. Just take a look at their structure: the Strategic Rocket Forces are subordinated to the Stavka; the Land Forces have their own rocket troops; the Air Defence Forces are subordinated to the Stavka; the Land Forces have their own air defence troops. They also have their own aircraft, which are independent of the Air Forces. The Air Defence Forces, in their numbers and equipment the strongest in the world, are subordinated to the Stavka; the Land Forces also have their own airborne troops which, using the same yardstick, are the second strongest in the world.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Land Forces has no more than an administrative function. His headquarters contains neither an Operational nor an Intelligence Directorate. All operational planning is carried out by the mixed commands of the Fronts, Strategic Directions or General Staff. The Commander-in-Chief's responsibilities are limited to the equipment, provisioning and training of his forces. However, despite the fact that he has no responsibility for the direction of operations the C-in-C Land Forces is still a highly influential administrator. Clearly, anyone who is responsible for the development and supply of forty-one Armies, including eight Tank Armies deserves respect.

The Commanders of the various arms of service of the Land Forces, too, have purely administrative functions. The direction of operations, as we already know, is

the function of mixed all-arms commands, which are not subordinated for this function to either the C-in-C or the Commanders of individual arms of service.

2

The Motor-Rifle Troops

Each motor-rifle section has a strength of eleven. One man acts as assistant to the rocket launcher and is jokingly referred to as the missile transporter. He does indeed carry three rockets, in a satchel. Each of these has a warhead capable of penetrating the armour of any modern tank, booster and sustainer engines, a spin stabiliser, a turbine, a fin assembly and a tracer compound.

His are not the only rockets in the section. It is also equipped with anti-aircraft rockets with seeker heads, which enable them to distinguish hostile aircraft from friendly ones and to destroy them. In addition, the section has four 9-M-14 'Malyutka' rockets which have an automatic guidance system. All this in one infantry section.

The section's BMP-1 combat vehicle has an automatic 73mm gun and three machine guns and has sufficient fire-power, manoeuvrability and protection to take on any modern light tank. The section also has three radio sets, sensors for the detection of radioactivity and gas and other complex devices in addition to its ordinary infantry equipment.

At this, the lowest, level, we find not a true infantry formation but a hybrid of tank, anti-tank, SAM, chemical, sapper and other sub-units.

The infantry is the oldest of the arms of service. All the remainder originated later and were developed as additions or reinforcements to the infantry. From our examination of the infantry section we see that the modern infantry is an arm of service which, even at its lowest level, has absorbed elements of many others.

The concept of the infantry, not as cannon fodder, but as the framework of the entire Armed Forces, the skeleton on which the whole of the remainder develops, has been held for a long time by Soviet generals. After the last war, all Soviet infantry officer training schools were renamed Officer Cadet Academies, and began to turn out, not run-of-the-mill platoon commanders, but commanders with a wide range of knowledge, able to organise cooperation between all arms of service in the battlefield, in order to ensure joint success.

It is for this reason that today's officers are not called either infantry or motor-rifle commanders, but all-arms commanders.

The organisation of a normal Soviet regiment which, by tradition, is still called a motor-rifle regiment, is as follows:

- Command headquarters

- Reconnaissance company

- Signals company

- Tank battalion (three companies)

- Three motor-rifle battalions (each of three companies and one automatic mortar battery)

- A battalion of self-propelled howitzers (three fire batteries and one control battery)

- A battery of Grad-P multiple rocket launchers

- A SAM battery

- An engineer company

- A chemical defence company

- A maintenance company

- A motor transport company

In all, the regiment has 27 companies, only 9 of which are motor-rifle companies. It is significant that, in a so-called 'motor-rifle' regiment, there are 10 artillery battery commanders--that is to say, one more than the number of motor-rifle company commanders.

If we move a little higher, to the level of a division, we find that, surprisingly, it is still referred to as a 'motor-rifle' division. We will look at the organisation of a motor-rifle division later; for the present we will simply note that it contains a total of 165 companies and batteries. Of these only 28 are motor-rifle companies; it also has 23 tank companies and 67 artillery batteries (mortar, anti-aircraft and rocket). The remainder is made up of reconnaissance, signal and engineer, chemical and other companies.

The motor-rifle troops make up the bulk of the Soviet forces. Organisationally, they consist of 123 divisions and of an additional 47 regiments, which form part of the complement of tank divisions. In addition, there are motor-rifle battalions serving in fortified areas and also with the Navy's marine infantry brigades.

In peacetime motor-rifle sub-units are divided into those with normal equipment (armoured personnel carriers) and those equipped with infantry combat vehicles (BMPs). This is today's version of the age-old division between light and heavy infantry, between grenadiers and chasseurs.

In theory all motor-rifle regiments in tank divisions and one regiment in each motor-rifle division should be equipped with BMPs. In practice, this depends upon the output of the defence industries and upon their ability to supply combat equipment to the forces. In many inland military districts divisions have not received the BMPs allocated to them. By contrast, divisions stationed in East Germany have two rather than one BMP regiment.

Sub-units equipped with BMPs have much greater fire- and striking-power than their normal motor-rifle equivalents. This is not only because a BMP has better protection, armament and manoeuvrability than an armoured personnel carrier. BMP sub-units also have far more supporting weapons. For instance, a motor-rifle battalion stationed on Soviet territory has a mortar platoon. An equivalent BMP battalion has a battery instead of a platoon. Moreover, these are not standard but automatic mortars, and they are self-propelled rather than towed. A standard motor-rifle regiment has a howitzer battery, or in some cases a battalion of towed howitzers. A BMP regiment has a howitzer battalion equipped with self-propelled amphibious howitzers and a further battery of 'Grad-P' multiple rocket launchers.

BMP sub-units are the first to receive new anti-tank, anti-aircraft, engineering and communications equipment. They are, in fact, the trump suit in the pack.

3

The Tank Forces

The Tank Forces represent the main striking power of the Land Forces. Their organisation is simple and well-defined. Every unit commander has his own tank assault force, of a size appropriate to his position. The commander of a motor-rifle regiment has a tank battalion at his disposal. The commander of a motor-rifle division has his own tank regiment. An Army commander has one tank division and a Front Commander a Tank Army. Finally, the Commander-in-Chief of a Strategic Direction has a Group of Tank Armies. Combat operations at each level are organised according to established principles. An advance by a motor-rifle regiment is, essentially, an advance by a tank battalion which is supported by all the other battalions and

companies of the regiment. This principle applies at all levels. You could, in fact, say that an advance by a Strategic Direction is really a break-through by a Tank Army Group supported by the operations of the three or four Fronts which belong to that Direction.

In addition to this basic striking force, Front Commanders and C-in-Cs of Strategic Directions may keep independent tank divisions in reserve, using them for rapid relief of the divisions which suffer the worst losses. Besides this, however, each commander, from divisional level upwards, has what might be called a personal tank guard. Besides the tank regiment which is his main striking force, a division commander has an independent tank battalion. Thus, a motor-rifle division has seven tank battalions in all; one in each of its three motor-rifle regiments, three in its tank regiment and the independent battalion. This battalion is entirely different from the others. Whereas the ordinary tank battalions have 31 tanks (3 companies of 10 each and one for the battalion commander), an independent battalion has 52 tanks (5 companies of 10 each, one for the battalion commander and the divisional commander's own tank). Unlike the others, an independent tank battalion has reconnaissance, anti-aircraft, engineer and chemical platoons. In its make-up it is more like a small, independent tank regiment, than a large battalion. In addition, the independent tank battalions are the first to receive the latest equipment. I have seen many divisions equipped with T-44 tanks while the independent tank battalions had T-10Ms, which have then received T-55s, while the independent battalions got T-72s. The divisional commander will carefully and patiently assemble all his best crews in this battalion. The commander of a motor-rifle regiment will throw his tank battalion into the thick of a battle, and a divisional commander will do the same with his tank regiment but he will keep his independent tank battalions in reserve. These protect respectively, the division's headquarters and the division's rocket battalion. These are not, of course, their main functions, but fall to the lot of the independent battalions because they almost always function as reserves.

But let us suppose that during a battle a situation arises in which a commander must throw in everything he has, a situation which can result in either victory or disaster. This is the moment at which he brings his own personal guard into the operation, a fresh, fully-rested battalion, of unusual size, made up of his best crews and equipped with the best tanks. At this moment a divisional commander is risking everything and for this reason he may head this, his own independent, tank battalion.

An Army Commander, too, in addition to the tank division which forms his striking force, has an independent tank battalion to act as his personal guard. He puts it into action only at the last possible moment and it may be with this battalion that he meets his own death in battle. In addition to his Tank Army, each Front Commander has an independent tank brigade, consisting of the best crews in the whole Front and equipped with the best tanks. Normally a Front's independent tank brigade has four or five battalions and one motor-rifle battalion. The commander of a Strategic Direction, too, has his personal tank guard, in addition to his Tank Army Group. This guard consists of a single special independent tank division or, in some cases, of a tank corps made up of two divisions.

In all, the Tank Forces have 47 tank divisions, 127 regiments, serving with motor-rifle divisions and more than 500 battalions, either serving with motor-rifle regiments or acting as reserves for commanders of varying ranks. In peacetime their total strength is 54,000 tanks.

After the end of the Second World War, the Rocket Troops were treated as a separate arm of service, not forming part of any one of the Armed Services but subordinated directly to the Minister of Defence. In 1959 they were split up. The Strategic Rocket Forces were established as a separate Armed Service. Those rocket troops who were not absorbed by the new Service were taken over by the Land forces and united with the Artillery to form the Artillery and Rocket Troops, as one of the constituent arms of service of the Land Forces.

At present this arm of service is equipped with four types of artillery--rocket, rocket launcher (multi-barrelled, salvo-firing), anti-tank and general purpose (mortars, howitzers and field guns). Each commander has at his disposal the artillery resources appropriate to his rank. Commanders of divisions and upwards have some of each of all four types of artillery weapon. Thus a motor-rifle division has one rocket battalion, one battalion of multi-barrelled rocket launchers, one anti-tank battalion and a howitzer regiment of three battalions for general support. We will discuss the quantity of fire weapons available to commanders of differing ranks when we come to talk about operational organisation.

5

The Air Defence Troops of the Land Forces

We have already spoken of the existence of two separate air defence systems--national and military. The two are unconnected: the difference between them is that the national system protects the territory of the Soviet Union and is therefore stationary while the military system is an integral part of the fighting services and moves with them in order to protect them from air attack.

Organisationally, each infantry section, with the exception of those which travel in platoon commanders' vehicles, contains one soldier armed with a 'Strela 2' anti-aircraft rocket launcher. There are two such launchers in each platoon. The seeker heads with which they are fitted enable rockets fired from these launchers to shoot down enemy aircraft flying at heights of two kilometres and at distances of four kilometres. In every tank platoon, in addition to the anti-aircraft machine-guns carried by each tank, one of the leaders has three of these launchers, which are carried on the outside of the tank's turret.

Each motor-rifle and tank regiment has an anti-aircraft battery, armed with 4 ZSU-23-4 'Shilka' self-propelled rocket launchers and with 4 'Strela 1' launchers (known in the West as the SA-9). These two systems complement each other and are highly effective, the Shilka especially so. I have watched a Shilka working from a stony, ploughed field, belching out an uninterrupted blast of fire against small balloons released, without warning, from a wood a couple of kilometres away. The results it achieved were quite overwhelming. The British reference book, *Jane's*, is quite right to describe the Shilka as the best in the world.

The officer in charge of the anti-aircraft defence of each motor-rifle and tank regiment coordinates the operations of his battery and also those of all the Strela-2 launchers.

Each motor-rifle and tank division has one SAM regiment, armed with 'Kub' (SA-6) or 'Romb' (SA-8) rockets. Each Army has one SAM brigade, armed with 'Krug' (SA-4) rockets.

In addition to all these, a Front Commander has under his command two SAM brigades with 'Krug' rockets, several regiments with 'Kubs' or 'Rombs' and several AAA regiments, armed with 57mm and 100mm anti-aircraft guns.

The Airborne Assault Troops

Although the Airborne Assault troops wear the same uniform as airborne troops, they have no connection with them. Airborne troops are under the direct control of the Supreme Commander; they use transport aircraft and parachutes for their operations. By contrast, the Airborne Assault troops form part of the Land Forces and are operationally subordinate to a Front Commander. They are transported by helicopter and do not use parachutes. Moreover, their sub-units use helicopters not only as a means of transport but as fighting weapons.

In Soviet eyes, the helicopter has nothing in common with conventional aircraft; it is regarded virtually as a tank. At first this may seem a strange idea, but it is undeniably well founded. No aircraft can seize enemy territory; this is done by tanks, artillery and infantry working together. Helicopters are therefore regarded as belonging to the Land Forces, as tanks which do not fear minefields, mountains or water obstacles, as tanks with high fire-power and great speed but which have only limited protection.

The airborne assault troops were established in 1969. Their 'father' and guardian angel was Mao. If he had never existed nor would they. Soviet generals had been pressing for their introduction since the beginning of the 1950s, but there were never sufficient resources for their creation and the decision to bring them into service was postponed from one five-year plan to another. However, in 1969, armed clashes took place on the frontier with China, and Soviet generals declared that they could only defend a line 1,000 kilometres in length with tanks which could be concentrated within a few hours at any one of the sectors of this enormous frontier. So the MI-24 made its appearance--a flying tank which no weapon has yet managed to shoot down in Afghanistan.

Military helicopters, which thus originated primarily as a weapon against China, actually made their first appearance with the Soviet forces in Eastern Europe. This was because the situation on the Chinese frontier improved; that on the frontiers with the West can never improve.

Organisationally, the airborne assault troops consist of brigades, subordinated to Front Commanders. Each brigade is made up of one helicopter assault regiment (64 aircraft), one squadron of MI-26 heavy transport helicopters and three airborne rifle battalions.

The airborne assault brigade is used in the main axis of advance of a Front in conjunction with a Tank Army and under air cover provided by an Air Army.

In addition to this brigade, a Front also has other airborne assault subunits, which do not represent part of its establishment. Each Army has one helicopter transport regiment, which is used to air-lift ordinary motor-rifle sub-units behind the enemy's front line. In each motor-rifle regiment, one battalion in three is trained, in peacetime, for operations with helicopters. Thus each division has three battalions trained for this purpose and each Army has thirteen such battalions.

Airborne assault forces are growing continually. Very soon we can expect to see airborne assault brigades with every Army and airborne assault divisions with every Front.

Diversionary Troops (SPETSNAZ)

Diversionary troops, too, wear the same uniform as airborne troops without having any connection with them. Unlike airborne assault troops, they are parachuted from aircraft into the enemy's rear areas. However, they differ from normal airborne troops in not having heavy equipment and in operating more covertly.

These SPETSNAZ forces form the airborne forces of the Land Forces. They are used in the enemy's rear to carry out reconnaissance, to assassinate important political or military figures and to destroy headquarters, command posts, communications centres and nuclear weapons.

Each all-arms or tank army has one SPETSNAZ company, with a complement of 115, of whom 9 are officers and 11 are ensigns. This company operates in areas between 100 and 500 kilometres behind the enemy's front line. It consists of a headquarters, three diversionary platoons and a communications platoon. Depending on the tasks to be carried out, the officers and men of the company divide into as many as 15 diversionary groups, but during an operation they may work first as a single unit, then split into 3 or 4 groups, then into 15 and then back again into one.

Usually, SPETSNAZ companies are dropped the night before an Army begins an advance, at a moment when the anti-aircraft and other resources of the enemy are under greatest pressure. Thereafter, they operate ahead of the advancing sub-units of the Army.

Each Front has a SPETSNAZ brigade, consisting of a headquarters company and three diversionary battalions. In peace-time the SPETSNAZ companies of the Armies of the Front are combined as a SPETSNAZ battalion, which explains why it is sometimes thought that there are four battalions in each diversionary brigade. In wartime this battalion would split into companies which would join their respective Armies.

Each of the Front's three battalions operates in the enemy's rear in exactly the same way as the SPETSNAZ companies of the Armies. Each battalion can split into as many as 45 diversionary groups and the three together can therefore produce a total of up to 135 small groups. But, if necessary, a SPETSNAZ brigade can operate at full strength, using between 900 and 1,200 troops together against a single target. Such a target might be a nuclear submarine base, a large headquarters, or even a national capital.

The headquarters company of a SPETSNAZ brigade is of particular interest. Unlike both the SPETSNAZ battalions and normal Army companies, it is made up of specialists--between 70 and 80 of them. This HQ company forms part of the SPETSNAZ brigade and even many of the latter's officers may not be aware of its existence. In peacetime this company of specialists is concealed within the sports teams of the Military District. Boxing, wrestling, karate, shooting, running, skiing, parachute jumping--these are the sports they practice. As members of sports teams they travel abroad, visiting places in which they would kill people in the event of a future 'liberation'.

These Soviet sportsmen/parachutists, holders of most of the world's sporting records, have visited every national capital. They have made their parachute jumps near Paris, London and Rome, never concealing the fact that the sporting association which has trained them is the Soviet Army. When Munich, Rome and Helsinki applaud Soviet marksmen, wrestlers and boxers, everyone assumes that these are amateurs. But they are not--they are professionals, professional killers.

In addition to these small companies within the diversionary brigades of the Fronts, there are also SPETSNAZ Long-Range Reconnaissance Regiments. The Commander-in-Chief of each Strategic Direction has one of these regiments. The best of these regiments is stationed in the Moscow Military District. From time to time this regiment

goes abroad in full strength. On these occasions it goes under the title of the Combined Olympic Team of the USSR.

The KGB, as well as the Soviet Army, is training its diversionary specialists. The difference, in peacetime, between the two groups is that the Soviet Army contingent always belongs to the Central Army Sports Club while those from the KGB are members of the 'Dynamo' Sports Club. In the event of war, the two diversionary networks would operate independently of one another, in the interests of reliability and effectiveness. But a description of the diversionary network of the KGB lies outside our field.

8

The Fortified Area Troops

For many decades, the problem of defence was not the Soviet Union's first priority. All its resources were devoted to strengthening its striking power and its offensive capabilities. But then China began to present a challenge. Of course, both Soviet and Chinese leaders knew that Siberia could never provide a solution to China's territorial problems. Siberia looks large on the map but even the great conqueror Jenghiz Khan, who had defeated Russia, China and Iran, by-passed Siberia, which is nothing more than a snowy desert. Both Soviet and Chinese politicians realise--as do their Western opposite numbers--that the solution of the Chinese territorial problem lies in the colonisation of Australia. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union takes steps to strengthen its frontiers, even though it is certain that the West will be the first victim of China, as it was the first victim of Hitler and of the Iranian students.

The Soviet Union knows from its own experience how peace-loving a socialist country becomes when its economy, and consequently its army, is weak. But it also knows what can be achieved by a country whose whole economy has been nationalised--a country in which everything of value belongs solely to the government and in which all resources can therefore be concentrated in order to achieve a single goal. Knowing this, the Soviet Communists are preparing for every possible contingency in good time.

In 1969 the problem of defending the 7,000 kilometre frontier with China became particularly acute. The calculation involved was a simple one: one division can hold a sector of 10 or, at the outside, of 15 kilometres of the frontier. How many divisions would be needed to defend 7,000 kilometres?

Since there was no question of using the old methods of conducting operations, new methods--new solutions--were found. We already know that one of the most important of these was the establishment of the airborne assault troops. A second was the introduction of a second arm of service--the Fortified Area Troops. This represented a return to the age-old idea of building fortresses.

Today's Soviet fortresses--the Fortified Areas--are either completely new or are established in areas in which there were old defences, built before the Second World War, which withstood repeated attacks by the Japanese army.

Modern Fortified Areas are, of course, so constructed as to survive a nuclear war. All fortifications have been strengthened against nuclear attack and contain automatic systems for the detection of poisonous gas and air filtration plants.

Today, the old reinforced concrete structures are hardly ever used for operational purposes. Instead, they serve as underground command posts, stores, barracks, assembly points, communications centres, or hospitals. All operational structures are being newly built. Here the Soviet Union finds itself in a very favourable situation, because it has retained tens of thousands of old tanks. These are now installed in

reinforced concrete shelters so that only the turrets appear above the ground. The turrets themselves are strengthened with additional armour plating, often taken from obsolete warships. Sometimes the tops of turrets are covered with an additional shield made of old railway lines; the whole is then carefully camouflaged. Under the hull of the tank is a reinforced concrete magazine for several hundred shells and a shelter for personnel. The whole forms an excellent firing point, with a powerful (often 122mm) tank gun, two machine guns, an excellent optical system, reliable defence against a nuclear blast and an underground cable connecting it with the command post. With these resources, two or three soldiers can defend several kilometres of frontier. Since these tank turrets cover one another and since, in addition to them, the fortified areas contain thousands of gun turrets taken from obsolete warships, some of which contain quick-firing 6-barrelled 30mm guns, which are uniquely effective against infantry and aircraft, it would clearly be extremely difficult to break through such a line of defence. The Soviet Union has bitter memories of the way little Finland was able to halt the Soviet advance in this way in 1940.

Each fortified area is spaciouly set out, to increase its ability to withstand the effects of nuclear weapons. Organisationally, each fortified area is manned by five or six battalions of troops, a tank battalion and an artillery regiment and is able to cover a frontier sector of 30 to 50 kilometres or more. Clearly, it is not possible to fortify the entire frontier in this way and fortified areas are therefore set up in the most threatened sectors, the intervening territory being covered by nuclear and chemical mines and by airborne assault sub-units, located in bases protected by the fortified areas. This whole arrangement has already enabled the Soviet Union to establish a defensive system covering enormous stretches of territory, without having to move a single one of the divisions earmarked for the liberation of Western Europe from capitalist oppression.

The Air Forces

1

The Air Forces are the fourth most important of the Armed Services. There are two reasons for this low rating.

In the first place, the Commander-in-Chief of the Air Forces does not control all aircraft. Those of the Air Defence Forces--which are the fastest--are completely independent of the Air Forces. Those of the Navy, which include the most modern bombers, also have no link with the Air Forces. The airborne assault troops, as an integral part of the Land Forces, have nothing to do with the Air Forces either.

Secondly, unlike the Commanders-in-Chief of the Strategic Rocket Forces and the Air Defence Forces, the C-in-C of the Air Forces is not an operational commander but an administrator.

Subordinated to the C-in-C of the Air Forces in peacetime are:

Sixteen Air Armies

The Commander of the Long-Range Air Force

The Commander of Military Transport Aviation

Two military academies, officers' training schools, scientific research establishments, and test centres, administrative and supply echelons.

The total peacetime strength of the Air Forces is half a million men and 10,000 military aircraft and helicopters. However, the apparent strength of the C-in-C of the

Air Forces is illusory. He is responsible for all questions concerning the functioning of the Air Forces, from the development of new aircraft to the allocation of rations for guard dogs, from the training of cosmonauts to the propagation of experience acquired in Vietnam, but he is in no way involved in questions concerning the operational use of the aircraft under his command. This means that he is not an operational Marshal, but an official and administrator, albeit one of very high rank.

In wartime all sixteen Air Armies become integral components of the Fronts. Each Front has an Air Army, which it uses as it considers necessary. Only the highest operational commanders--the C-in-C of a Strategic Direction or the Supreme Commander--may interfere in a Front's operational planning problems (including those of the Air Army belonging to it). The C-in-C of the Air Forces may only advise the Supreme Commander if his advice is sought; if not, his task is solely to ensure that the Air Armies receive all the supplies they need to carry out their operations.

Nor is the Long-Range Air Force operationally controlled by the C-in-C of the Air Forces. It is subordinated exclusively to the Supreme Commander, who can either make use of its entire strength or allocate part of it, temporarily, to the Commanders-in-Chief of Strategic Directions.

The same arrangement applies to Military Transport Aviation which is entirely under the control of the Supreme Commander.

When control of all these forces is taken from the C-in-C of the Air Forces, he is left only with military academies, training schools, research centres, administrative echelons, hospitals and supply depots. He supplies operational units with reinforcements of equipment and men, oversees the supply of ammunition, fuel, and spare parts, investigates reasons for catastrophes and does a thousand other useful jobs, but he does not direct operations.

Even in peacetime the range of his responsibilities is similarly limited. His Air Armies are deployed in Military Districts and are used in accordance with the plans of their staffs. The General Staff decides how the Long-Range Air Force and Military Transport Aviation are to be used.

2

In peacetime there are sixteen Air Armies. In wartime there would be rather more, since some of them would be divided in two. An Air Army has a strictly regulated organisation. It consists of:

- Three fighter divisions
- Two fighter-bomber divisions
- One bomber division
- One regiment of fighter/reconnaissance aircraft
- One regiment of bomber/reconnaissance aircraft
- One or two regiments of light transport aircraft

Fighter, fighter/reconnaissance and fighter-bomber sub-units have the same organisational form: A flight has 4 aircraft, a squadron 12 (three flights), a regiment 40 (three squadrons and a command flight), a division 124 (three regiments and a command flight). Bomber and bomber/reconnaissance sub-units, too, are identically organised: A flight has 3 aircraft, a squadron 9 (three flights), a regiment 30 (three squadrons and a command flight), a division 93 (three regiments and a command flight).

In all, an Air Army has 786 combat aircraft and between 46 and 80 light transport aircraft. In the fighter, fighter-bomber and bomber regiments of its divisions, the first

squadron contains the best pilots, bomb-aimers and air crew. It is a great honour to serve in such a squadron. The second squadron is trained in reconnaissance duties as well as in its main functions. If necessary, the commander of an Air Army can put in the air, besides two reconnaissance regiments (70 aircraft), 18 squadrons, of what might be called 'amateur' reconnaissance aircrew (207 aircraft). Each third squadron is made up of young airmen. After the latter have put in some years of service in this third squadron, the commander of the regiment decides who shall join the 'aces' in the first squadron, who shall go to the second, for reconnaissance duties, and who shall stay in the third, among the novices. The best crews from the second squadron graduate to the reconnaissance regiments, where they become professionals rather than amateurs.

3

This is all very well, the informed reader may say, but in the 37th Air Army, which is stationed in Poland, there are two rather than six divisions, while the 16th Air Army, in East Germany, has eight divisions. Moreover, neither of these has a regiment of light transport aircraft; instead they have helicopter regiments. What is the significance of this?

It is quite simple. In wartime a Front would be deployed in Poland. It would contain an Air Army. The Army's headquarters and two Soviet division's are already there. In wartime the complement would be brought up to strength with divisions of the Polish Air Forces. In peacetime the latter should be allowed to believe themselves independent.

In East Germany two Fronts would be deployed and the 16th Air Army would therefore be split into two (this is always done during exercises). Each Army would contain four Soviet divisions, the complement being made up with divisions of the East German Air Forces. In peacetime the two Armies are combined because of the need for unified control over all air movement in East German air space and also in order to conceal the existence of two Fronts.

In wartime each Soviet motor-rifle and tank division will have 4 helicopters and every all-arms and tank Army will have 12. In peacetime it is best to keep them together, which reduces supply and training problems. This is why there are helicopter regiments in Air Armies. But at the outbreak of war the helicopters would fly off to their respective motor-rifle or tank divisions and Armies. The commanders of helicopter regiments would then be left without jobs. At this point they would be sent light transport aircraft, which would come from the civil air fleet. The pilots of these would be only half-militarised but highly experienced; the commanders are already military men. In wartime these regiments would be used to drop the diversionary sub-units of the Front and of its Armies behind the enemy's lines. For experienced civil pilots this is not a particularly difficult task and the aircraft which they would be flying would be those they fly in peacetime.

4

The Long-Range Air Force (LRAF) consists of three Corps, each of three divisions. Some Western sources mistakenly refer to these Corps as Armies.

Each LRAF division has approximately 100 combat aircraft and a corps consists, on average, of 300 strategic bombers, which can carry air-to-ground missiles.

The commander of the LRAF is subordinated to the C-in-C of the Air Forces only for administrative purposes. Operationally he is subordinate solely to the Supreme Commander.

There are three Strategic Directions. There are also three LRAF corps, which are deployed in such a way that each Strategic Direction can have access to one corps. During combat operations an LRAF corps may be temporarily subordinated to the C-in-C of a Strategic Direction or it may carry out operations to support him, while remaining under the command of the Supreme Commander.

However, the Soviet marshals would not plan to conduct operations in every sector simultaneously, but would concentrate on one. It is therefore possible that in wartime all 900 strategic bombers might be concentrated against one opponent.

5

Military Transport Aviation

The Military Transport Aviation (MTA) force consists of six divisions and several independent regiments. It has approximately 800 heavy transport and troop-carrying aircraft. Its main task is to land airborne forces in the enemy's rear.

Like the LRAF, the MTA is subordinated to the C-in-C of the Air Forces for administrative purposes only. Operationally, the MTA is subordinated to the Supreme Commander and it can be used only on his instructions, in accordance with the plans of the General Staff.

The MTA has a huge reserve organisation--Aeroflot, the largest airline in the world. Even in peacetime, the head of Aeroflot has the rank of Marshal of the Air Force and the function of Deputy to the C-in-C of the Air Forces. Organisationally, even in peacetime, Aeroflot is divided into squadrons, regiments and divisions and all its aircrew have ranks as officers of the reserve. In wartime Aeroflot's heavy aircraft would automatically become part of MTA, while its light aircraft would become transport regiments for the Air Armies of the Fronts. Even in peacetime Aeroflot helicopters are painted light green, as they would be in the divisions of an operational army.

Why does the West consider Admiral Gorshkov a strong man?

1

Of the five Armed Services the Navy ranks as fifth and last in importance. This certainly does not mean that the Navy is weak--simply that the other armed services are stronger.

In all, the Soviet Navy has four fleets: Northern, Pacific, Baltic and Black Sea, in order of strength.

Each of the four fleets has six arms of service:

- Submarines
- Naval Aviation
- Surface Ships
- Diversionsary SPETSNAZ naval sub-units
- Coastal Rocket and Artillery Troops
- Marine infantry

The first two of these are considered the primary arms of service; the remainder, including surface ships, are seen as auxiliary forces.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Navy has a purely administrative function, since the Northern Fleet is subordinated, for operational purposes, to the Stavka and the three other fleets to the C-in-Cs of the respective Strategic Directions. In addition to his administrative function, however, the C-in-C of the Navy is the Stavka's main adviser on the operational use of the Navy. In certain situations, too, on the instructions from the Stavka, he may direct groups of ships operating in the open sea. But he has no independent operational planning function; this is entirely the responsibility of the General Staff.

2

Soviet naval strength is based on submarines. These are divided by function, into submarines used for:

- command
- ballistic rockets
- cruise missiles
- torpedoes

They are further classified according to their method of propulsion--nuclear or diesel-electric. The building of diesel-electric submarines (except for some used for diversionary or reconnaissance purposes) has been halted. Henceforth all Soviet submarines will have nuclear propulsion.

Nuclear submarines are grouped in divisions, each of 8 to 12. All the submarines in a division have the same type of armament. A flotilla consists of 4 to 5 divisions. They have mixed complements and may consist of between 35 and 64 nuclear submarines with varying functions.

Diesel-electric submarines are organised in brigades each of 8 to 16. Brigades may form divisions (2 to 3 brigades) or squadrons (4 to 6 brigades).

3

Each fleet has a naval aviation component designated, for instance, 'Naval Aviation of the Northern Fleet'. Each such component is made up of air divisions and of independent regiments and is the equivalent of an Air Army. Each fleet's naval aviation normally includes a division armed with long-range air-to-surface missiles, for operation against enemy aircraft carriers, one or two divisions of long-range anti-submarine aircraft and independent regiments with anti-submarine seaplanes, torpedo-bombers, reconnaissance aircraft and supply and transport aircraft. In the last few years regiments of deck-landing aircraft and helicopters have been formed.

4

The Soviet Navy must be the only one in the world in which a nuclear-propelled cruiser, armed with missiles, is relegated to an auxiliary category. In fact, every Soviet surface ship, whether it is a battleship or a missile-cruiser, ranks as auxiliary (the exception is the aircraft carrier which is considered as a part of the naval air force). Perhaps this is correct; in a global war submarines and aircraft would play the primary roles. All other forces would work to support them. And, no matter how the number of Soviet surface ships may grow, Soviet submarines will always outnumber them. Moreover there has recently been a noticeable trend towards an increase in the

displacement of submarines and it is quite possible that they will eventually surpass the surface ships in tonnage, too, and will maintain their superiority permanently.

Soviet surface ships are organised in groups (for small ships only), brigades (medium-size ships and groups of smaller ones), divisions and squadrons.

In the next few years, the Soviet Navy will be enlarged by the acquisition of a series of large nuclear-propelled missile cruisers. Intensive work is being put into the design and building of large nuclear-propelled aircraft carriers. Ships like the *Moskva* and the *Kiev* have only been built in order to acquire the experience needed before really large ships are built. Particular attention will be paid to the building of large landing ships which are capable of a high degree of independence. The construction of small surface ships will continue. Despite the enormous progress which has been made in building surface ships, however, they will continue to be classified as auxiliary forces.

5

The presence of diversionary SPETSNAZ sub-units in the Soviet Navy is a closely guarded secret. Yet they exist and have done so for a long time. Already by the end of the 1950s each Fleet had its own SPETSNAZ diversionary brigade, under the direct command of the Third Department of the Intelligence Directorate at Naval Headquarters.

A diversionary brigade has one division of miniature submarines, two or three battalions of frogmen, a parachute battalion and a communications company. It forms an entirely independent combat unit and an independent arm of service within the fleet. For camouflage purposes, its members sometimes wear the uniform of the marine infantry. In other circumstances they may wear any other type of uniform, again as camouflage. The parachutists wear Naval Aviation uniform, the crews of the miniature submarines, of course, that of ordinary submarine crews, the remainder that of seagoing personnel, coastal artillery forces, etc.

Again for camouflage purposes, the personnel of a diversionary brigade is dispersed between several naval bases. This does not prevent it from functioning as a unified combat organisation. In wartime these brigades would be used against enemy naval installations, in the first place against nuclear submarine bases. Groups of diversionary troops may operate from surface ships or from large submarines or may be landed from aircraft. In addition, a unit of large fishing trawlers would be mobilised in wartime to launch and to support operations by miniature submarines. The compartments of these trawlers, designed to hold large catches, are ideal for the rapid launch or recovery of miniature submarines and small diversionary craft.

The diversionary SPETSNAZ brigades of the Navy, like those serving with Fronts, each have as part of their complement a headquarters company of specialists, whose primary task is the assassination of political and military leaders. These companies are disguised as naval athletic teams. These 'sportsmen' are, naturally, keen on rowing, swimming and scuba-diving as well as on shooting, boxing, wrestling, running and karate.

As a well-known example we can quote Senior Lieutenant Valentin Yerikalin, of the SPETSNAZ brigade of the Black Sea Fleet, who won a silver medal for rowing at the Olympic Games held in Mexico City. There was no attempt to conceal the fact that Yerikalin was a naval officer and a member of the Central Army Sports Club. Some years later this 'sportsman' turned up in Istanbul, having now become a diplomat. He was arrested by the Turkish police for trying to recruit a Turkish subject to work for the Black Sea Fleet, or, more precisely, for the diversionary brigade of this Fleet.

The Navy's coastal rocket and artillery troops consist of regiments and independent battalions. They are equipped with both stationary and mobile rocket launchers and with artillery weapons. Their task is to cover the approaches to principal naval bases and ports.

Each Fleet has Marine Infantry contingents, consisting of regiments and brigades. In their organisation, these regiments are similar to the motor-rifle regiments of the Land Forces. They differ from the latter in receiving special training for operating in varying conditions and also in being allocated personnel of a higher calibre. Generals from the Land Forces who have watched exercises carried out by the marine infantry often say, with some envy, that a regiment of marine infantry, with the same equipment as that issued to the Land Forces, is the equivalent in its operational potential of one of the latter's motor-rifle divisions.

The Soviet Navy has only one brigade of marine infantry. This belongs to the Pacific Fleet. It consists of two tank and five motor-rifle battalions and is equipped with especially heavy artillery. This brigade is sometimes mistakenly taken for two independent regiments of marine infantry.

The Soviet marine infantry has a very promising future. In the next few years it will receive new types of equipment which will enable it to put large units into action against distant targets. Special combat equipment is being developed for such operations by the marine infantry.

In our examination of the Soviet Navy we must bear in mind a myth which is widely believed in the West--'The Soviet Navy was weak until a strong man, Gorshkov, arrived and brought it up to its proper strength'. This presumption is untrue in several respects.

Until the Second World War, Soviet Communist expansion was directed at states adjacent to the USSR--Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Romania, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Mongolia, China. Understandably, in this situation, the senior officers of the Navy wielded little influence, for no one would allow them to build up the Navy at the expense of the Land or Air Forces. For the USSR, the Second World War was a land war, and during the first few years after the war, Communist aggression, too, remained entirely land-based--Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, Turkey, Greece, Korea, China. If Gorshkov had appeared during this period, no one would have allowed him to become all-powerful. During the first few years after the war too, there was another problem of overriding urgency--that of catching up with the United States in the fields of nuclear weapons and of delivery systems for them. Until this problem was solved, there could be no question of allowing Gorshkov to build a navy.

The situation changed radically at the end of the 1950s.

Throughout the world, Communist land-based aggression was running into opposition from a wall of states bonded together in military blocs. At this point, the acquisition of a navy became necessary if the campaign of aggression was to continue. Expansion was continuing beyond the seas and across oceans--in Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, Africa, Cuba and South America. In this situation, even if the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy had not wished to expand his fleets, he would have

been forced to do so. Until the war, the main threat to the USSR had come from continental powers--from Germany, France and Japanese-occupied Manchuria. After the war the United States became the main enemy. Of course, anyone occupying Gorshkov's position would have received billions of additional rubles to use in the struggle against the USA. At the beginning of the 1960s it was established that a nuclear submarine provided an excellent platform for rockets. A start was made with their production. Of course, they would not be at Gorshkov's disposal but he was given the green light to develop conventional naval forces with which to protect them.

One final point. The Politburo had realised quite clearly, early on and without help from Gorshkov, that the great sea powers, Great Britain, the United States and Japan, would take the place of Germany and France as the main enemies of the Soviet Union. It was for this reason that in July 1938 the Politburo adopted a resolution 'On the construction of an ocean-going fleet'. (At that time Gorshkov was only the commander of a destroyer.) In accordance with the resolution, a start was made with the building of aircraft carriers like the *Krasnoye Znamya* and with giant battleships like the *Sovetskiy Soyuz* and cruisers like the *Shapayev*.

Germany entered the Second World War with 57 submarines, Great Britain with 58, Japan with 56 and the United States with 99. According to its own figures, the Soviet Union had 212 when it came into the war, although American engineers, who built these submarines, estimate that it had 253. The Soviet Navy had 2,824 aircraft in 1941, the coastal artillery had 260 batteries, including some 406mm guns. All this was before Gorshkov. The war put a brake on the shipbuilding programme and after its end the building of all the large ships laid down before the war was discontinued, since they had become obsolete.

However, the Politburo understood the need for an ocean-going navy and a new shipbuilding programme, of which we can see the results today, was approved in September 1955. This programme pre-dated Gorshkov. He was simply empowered to carry out a programme which had been authorised before his time.

There is no doubt that Gorshkov is a strong-willed and purposeful admiral, but this counts for little in the USSR. No admiral would be allowed to advocate this or that step if the Politburo thought differently from him.

Finally, no matter how powerful the West may consider Gorshkov, the fact remains that the Soviet Navy ranks as fifth of the five Armed Services.

The Airborne Forces

1

The Airborne Forces (ABF) do not rank as one of the Armed Services but as an arm of service. However they are an independent arm of service, and do not belong to any of the Armed Services. In peacetime they are subordinated directly to the Minister of Defence and in wartime to the Supreme Commander.

At present there are only 13 formations in the world which one can call 'Airborne Divisions'. The US, West Germany, France, China and Poland each have one. The remaining 8 belong to the Soviet Union.

The airborne divisions are directed, for both administrative and operational purposes, by a Commander. His post is of unique importance. Although he commands only 8 divisions, he has the rank of General of the Army, the same as that held by the Commander-in-Chief of the Land Forces, who has 170 divisions under his command.

In peacetime, all the ABF divisions are up to their full wartime complement and staffed by the best troops. The ABF have first choice of personnel, before even the Strategic Rocket Forces and the Navy's submarine detachments.

ABF troops may operate under the control of the C-in-C of Strategic Directions, in groups of 1 to 3 divisions, or they may function independently.

If 1 to 3 divisions are to be used for an airdrop in a particular sector their operations are coordinated by an ABF corps command group, which is established temporarily for this purpose. One of the ABF Commander's deputies commands the corps. If 4 or 5 divisions are to be used, a temporary ABF Army command group is established. This may be headed by the Commander of the ABF himself, or by one of his deputies.

The entire strength of Military Transport Aviation of the Air Forces is controlled by the Commander of the ABF while an airborne assault operation is taking place.

Each-ABF division consists of:

Three parachute regiments

A reconnaissance battalion (18 armoured reconnaissance vehicles)

A battalion of self-propelled artillery (32 airborne assault guns)

An anti-tank battalion (18 85mm guns)

A howitzer battalion (18 122mm guns)

A battalion of multiple rocket launchers (18 BM 27-Ds)

An anti-aircraft battalion (32 ZSU-23-4s)

A communications battalion

A motor transport battalion

A battalion responsible for the storage and packing of supply-dropping parachutes

A chemical warfare company

An engineer company

A parachute regiment has three battalions and mortar, anti-aircraft, anti-tank, and self-propelled artillery batteries.

All the battalions in one regiment of a division are equipped with BMD-1 armoured personnel carriers. Two other regiments have one battalion each of BMD-1s and two of light motor vehicles. Thus, of the nine parachute battalions in a division, five have armoured vehicles of great manoeuvrability and considerable fire-power, the remaining four have light vehicles. In all, a parachute division has 180 armoured personnel carriers, 62 self-propelled guns, 18 multiple rocket launchers, 36 field guns, 45 mortars, 54 anti-aircraft guns, more than 200 anti-aircraft rocket launchers and more than 300 anti-tank rocket launchers. The division is fully motorised, with more than 1,500 vehicles. Its average peacetime complement is 7,200.

3

There has been discussion for some considerable time, in both the Soviet General Staff and the Central Committee, of the question of transforming the ABF into a sixth, independent Armed Service.

It is envisaged that such a Service would have four or five parachute divisions, a large contingent of transport aircraft, several newly-established divisions of marine infantry, units of landing ships and several aircraft carriers with fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters.

Experience has shown that the USSR has not enough forces equipped and trained for armed intervention in a territory which is separated from it by an ocean and that it is unprepared for such an undertaking. There are many examples--Cuba, Indonesia,

South Africa, Chile, Central America. A new Armed Service of the sort described would enable the Soviet Union to intervene effectively in such areas.

As its internal crises become more acute, the aggressiveness of the Soviet Union increases. For this reason it appears probable that the sixth Armed Service will be created in the next few years.

Military Intelligence and its Resources

1

Soviet Military Intelligence is neither an Armed Service nor an Arm of Service. It has no uniform or identifying badge or emblem. Nor are these needed. Intelligence is a logistical support service, like the services concerned with nuclear warheads or camouflage or disinformation.

All these services are secret and do not need publicity. Each of them adopts the appearance of the unit in which it finds itself and becomes indistinguishable from it.

Soviet military intelligence is a gigantic organisation, which performs a vast range of tasks. In numbers and technical equipment it is approximately the size of the Bundeswehr--the entire armed services of the Federal German Republic.

In action, decisions are taken by commanding officers, ranging from those in charge of sections to the Supreme Commander. The plans on which these decisions are based are prepared for the commanding officer by his staff. He then either approves the plan or rejects it and orders that another one should be prepared. All commanding officers from battalion level upwards have staffs. The chief of staff is both his commander's principal adviser and his deputy. Staffs vary in size according to the importance of the unit--a battalion has a staff of two, and the General Staff numbers tens of thousands. In spite of this, the work of any staff proceeds according to the same plan.

The first officer on the staff plans operations, the second officer provides him with the information he needs about the enemy. The chief of staff coordinates the work of these two, helps them, checks their work, prepares a plan with their help and presents it to the commander, who either accepts or rejects it.

On a battalion staff the chief of staff and the first officer are one and the same. The staff of a regiment consists of a chief of staff, a first officer and a second officer, who is in charge of intelligence work. On a divisional staff the first and second officers have their own working groups. An Army staff has first and second departments. The staff of a Front and of a Strategic Direction has First and Second Directorates. The General Staff has First and Second Chief Directorates.

Staffs also have other departments, directorates or Chief Directorates but the work of the first component--planning--and of the second--intelligence--form the backbone of any staff.

All intelligence work (which includes reconnaissance) from battalion level to the very top, is thus wholly in the hands of the staff officers concerned and represents one of the most important components of the work of the staff.

Those employed on intelligence and reconnaissance work can be divided into 'professionals'--those whose basic function it is--and 'amateurs'--those who are employed on intelligence work from time to time and for whom it is an additional rather than their main occupation.

The intelligence and reconnaissance resources of a battalion are not large. A motor-rifle battalion has a mortar battery, with a command platoon, which includes an

artillery reconnaissance section. This section works for the mortar battery, reporting all the results which it obtains both to the battery commander and to the second officer on the battalion's staff, who is responsible for all reconnaissance work in the battalion. This is all. All the personnel involved are 'professionals'. In a tank battalion there is no mortar battery and therefore no 'professionals'. But there are 'amateurs'. In each motor-rifle or tank battalion the second company, besides carrying out its normal duties, is trained for reconnaissance operations behind the enemy's lines. During an action any of the platoons of the second company may be detailed for reconnaissance tasks for the battalion. Sometimes the whole second company may be detached to carry out reconnaissance tasks for the regiment.

2

The second officer on the staff of a regiment has the title 'Regimental Intelligence Officer'. He is a major and the resources at his disposal are not inconsiderable.

Directly under his command is the regiment's reconnaissance company, which has 4 tanks, 7 armoured vehicles (BMP 'Korshun' or BRDM-3) and 9 motorcycles.

In addition the regiment has an artillery battalion, anti-tank, rocket and anti-aircraft batteries. All these have resources sufficient to meet their own requirements for artillery reconnaissance and observation and the information which they produce is also sent to regimental headquarters.

The regiment also has an engineer company with a reconnaissance platoon and a chemical warfare company with a CW reconnaissance platoon. The specialised reconnaissance activities of these platoons are of primary benefit to the engineer and CW companies but since they are engaged in reconnaissance they are controlled by the regimental intelligence officer (RIO).

Finally, the latter is in charge of the second officers on the staffs of the regiment's battalions. These officers work for their battalions but are subordinated to and fully controlled by the RIO. During combat operations, at the direction of the commander of the regiment, the 'amateur' companies from any of the battalions can be subordinated to the RIO, to work for the regiment as a whole. Thus, the regiment's 'professional' reconnaissance company may be joined at any time by a second tank company and by the three second companies from the motor-rifle battalions.

In a battle, a regiment's reconnaissance companies operate at ranges of up to 50 kilometres away. Both the 'professional' and the 'amateur' companies have BMP or BRDM vehicles for CW, engineer and artillery reconnaissance work. The fact that these vehicles are always with what are purely reconnaissance sub-units has led to the idea that they are an integral part of these units. But this is not so. The CW reconnaissance platoon is taken from the CW company, the engineer reconnaissance platoon from the engineer company and so forth. Quite simply, it would be both pointless and dangerous to send special reconnaissance sub-units behind the enemy lines unprotected. For this reason they always operate with normal tank and motor-rifle reconnaissance sub-units, which protect and are temporarily in command of them.

During reconnaissance operations, all reconnaissance sub-units work covertly, keeping away from concentrations of enemy troops and always avoiding contact. They operate to achieve surprise, working from ambushes to capture prisoners and documents and they also carry out observation of the enemy. They accept battle only when they clash unexpectedly with the enemy, and if it is impossible to avoid contact or to escape. If they do find themselves in contact with superior numbers of the enemy they will often disperse, meeting again some hours later at an agreed spot in order to resume their mission.

There is one situation in which reconnaissance sub-units would accept battle, whatever the circumstances. If they encountered enemy nuclear forces (missile launchers, nuclear artillery, convoys or stores of nuclear warheads) they would report that they had located the target, would discontinue their reconnaissance mission and would launch a surprise attack on the enemy, with all their resources, whatever this might cost and whatever the strength of the enemy's defences.

3

A divisional intelligence officer--the second officer on a divisional staff--has the rank of lieutenant-colonel. He has very considerable resources at his disposal. In the first place he is in charge of all the regimental intelligence officers, in the division, with all their subordinates, both 'professional' and 'amateur'. He supervises artillery reconnaissance and observation, which in a division is already of sizeable proportions. He is also in charge of the engineer reconnaissance company of the division's sapper battalion and of the CW reconnaissance company in the division's CW protection battalion. In addition, he has personal control of the division's reconnaissance battalion.

To coordinate the workings of all these resources (more than a thousand 'professionals' and more than fifteen hundred 'amateurs') a divisional intelligence officer has a group of officers, which has the designation 'Second Group of the Divisional Staff'.

The reconnaissance battalion of a division is made up of the division's best soldiers and officers--the fittest, toughest, most quick-witted and resourceful. It has four companies and auxiliary sub-units.

The first of these, a long-range, reconnaissance company, is the smallest and the most ready for battle of the 166 companies and batteries in the division. It has a strength of 27, 6 of whom are officers and the remainder sergeants. It has a commander, a company sergeant-major and five long-range reconnaissance groups each consisting of an officer and four sergeants. These groups can operate far behind the enemy lines. They may be landed by helicopter or may push through into the enemy's rear in jeeps or light armoured vehicles after following close behind their own troops and then passing them and moving on far ahead. Long-range reconnaissance groups are used both to gather intelligence and to carry out diversionary and terrorist operations.

The battalion's second and third companies have the same organisational structure as the reconnaissance companies of regiments and use the same equipment and tactics, but unlike them they operate at distances of up to 100 kilometres ahead of the front line.

The fourth company is the 'radio and radar reconnaissance' or signals intelligence company. Its function is to detect and locate enemy radio transmitters, to intercept and decipher their transmissions and to locate, identify and study the enemy's radar stations. In peacetime, the great majority of these companies are already on an operational footing. In the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, for instance, there are 19 tank and motor-rifle divisions. These contain 19 reconnaissance battalions, each of which has one signals intelligence company. All these companies have been moved, in peacetime, up to the border with West Germany and are working at full stretch, twenty-four hours a day, collecting and analysing any radio signal which is transmitted in their operational area. The same applies to all the other, similar companies of the divisions which are stationed on Soviet territory and in all the frontier military districts. In a number of cases, the signals intelligence companies of divisions in military districts away from the frontier have been moved into frontier districts and

are working operationally, supplementing and duplicating the work of other similar companies.

The second officer of the staff of an Army has the rank of colonel. To control the Army's reconnaissance work he has his own department, the Second Department of the Army Staff. Because an Army has so many reconnaissance resources and because these differ so widely one from the other, the department is divided into four groups.

The first group is concerned with the reconnaissance activity of the motor-rifle and tank divisions of the Army and also of the Army's independent brigades and regiments.

Army reconnaissance departments have no second group.

The third group is concerned with diversionary and terrorist operations. Under its control is an independent SPETSNAZ company, the organisation and functions of which have already been discussed.

The fourth group deals with the processing of all the information which is received.

The fifth group directs radio and radar reconnaissance. It controls two electronic intelligence battalions. It also coordinates the operations carried out in this field by the Army's divisions. Needless to say, all signals intelligence battalions are working operationally in peacetime. In East Germany, for instance, there are 5 Soviet Armies, that is to say 10 electronic intelligence battalions, which keep a constant watch on the enemy, in addition to the 19 companies which are on the strength of the divisions of these Armies.

5

A Front is made up of two or three all-arms armies and of a tank and an air army. It possesses a large quantity of reconnaissance resources--enough to equal the intelligence services of a large European industrial state.

The second officer of a Front's staff is a major-general. To control the reconnaissance and intelligence activities of the Front he has a reconnaissance directorate (the Front's Second Directorate), which has five departments.

The first of these controls the reconnaissance work of all the Armies belonging to the Front, including that carried out by the Air Army, which we have already discussed.

The second department carries out agent work, for which it maintains an Intelligence Centre, working on behalf of the Armies making up the Front, since these do not run agents, and three or four intelligence outposts. The centre and the outposts are hard at work, in peacetime, obtaining intelligence in the territory in which the Front would operate in wartime. The Soviet Army has a total of 16 military districts, 4 groups of forces, and 4 fleets. Each of these has a staff with a Second Directorate, which itself has a second department. There are thus 24 of these; each of them constitutes an independent agent running intelligence organisation, which is active on the territories of several foreign countries, working separately from any other similar services. Each of them has four or five individual agent-running organisations which seek to recruit foreigners who will work for the Front or for its tank armies, fleet, flotilla or all-arms armies.

The third department of each of these 24 Reconnaissance Directorates concerns itself with diversionary and terrorist activities. The department supervises activity of this sort in the armies of the Front but also has its own men and equipment. It has a SPETSNAZ diversionary brigade and a SPETSNAZ diversionary agent network of foreign nationals, who have been recruited to work for the Front in the latter's operational area in wartime. Thus, in both peace and wartime the officer in charge of the reconnaissance and intelligence work of a Front or Fleet has two completely

separate secret networks, one, which gathers intelligence, controlled by the second department of the Directorate and another, concerned with diversionary and terrorist operations, which is subordinated to the third department.

The fourth department collates all the reconnaissance and intelligence material which is produced.

The fifth department is concerned with the radio and reconnaissance work of the divisions and armies and also has two regiments and a helicopter squadron of its own which also carry out signals intelligence operations.

6

A Strategic Direction is made up of four Fronts, one Fleet and a Group of Tank Armies. Its staff contains a Reconnaissance Directorate, headed by a lieutenant-general. We already know that he has at his disposal a diversionary SPETSNAZ long-range reconnaissance regiment, containing Olympic medal-winners, most of whom are not only professional athletes but professional killers. The Reconnaissance Directorate also has an entire range of reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering equipment, one of which deserves special mention.

This is the 'Yastreb' pilotless rocket aircraft, which is launched from a mobile rocket launcher and which carries out photo- and radio-reconnaissance at heights of more than 30 kilometres, flying at speeds in excess of 3,500 kilometres per hour. From Byelorussia the 'Yastreb' has successfully carried out photographic reconnaissance over Spain, Great Britain and the French Atlantic seaboard. Its appearance at the beginning of the 1970s caused alarm at NATO headquarters. It was mistakenly identified as a MIG-25R. After a MIG 25 had appeared in Japan and had been carefully examined, the experts came to the conclusion that this aircraft had insufficient operational radius to fly over Western Europe. It was realised that there had been a false alarm and in order not to cause another one the Soviet Union discontinued flights by the 'Yastreb' in peacetime. However, it is still being used over China, Asia and Africa and over the oceans. Having the invulnerability of a rocket and the precision of an aircraft, the 'Yastreb' would also make an excellent vehicle for a nuclear warhead. Unlike a rocket it can be used again and again.

7

The second officer of the General Staff has the title of Head of the Chief Intelligence Directorate (GRU). He is a full General of the Army. Besides controlling the intelligence and reconnaissance resources subordinated to him, he has his own, incomparably huge intelligence network. The GRU works for the Supreme Commander. It carries out espionage on a scale unparalleled in history. It is enough to record that during World War II the GRU was able, with its own resources, to penetrate the German General Staff from Switzerland and to steal nuclear secrets from the United States, and that after the war it was able to induce France to leave NATO, besides carrying out many less risky operations. The work of the GRU's agent networks is controlled by the first four Directorates, each of which is headed by a lieutenant-general. The processing of all information reaching the GRU is carried out by an enormous organisation which is grouped into six Information Directorates. Today the Head of the GRU has two separate, world-wide, intelligence organisations, a colossal number of electronic intelligence centres, centrally controlled diversionary units and so on and so forth.

However, the Chief Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff is a subject which calls for a substantial book to itself.

Staffs are of different types. The smallest is that of a battalion, the largest is the General Staff. But each has its own intelligence and reconnaissance resources, just as each brain has its own eyes and ears. The higher staffs control the lower ones and the corresponding higher intelligence organisations direct those below them. At all levels, the intelligence and reconnaissance organisations work for their respective staffs, but if intelligence which is received is of interest to either a higher or a lower echelon, it is passed on immediately.

Here is a particularly interesting example of such coordination.

In the summer of 1943, the Red Army was preparing to halt the enormously powerful German advance. In the Kursk salient seven Soviet Fronts were simultaneously preparing their defences.

The overall coordination of operations in the Strategic Direction was in the hands of Marshal G. K. Zhukov. Never in the history of warfare had such a defence system been set up, on a front more than a thousand kilometres in length. The overall depth of the obstacles erected by the engineers was 250-300 kilometres. On an average, 7,000 anti-tank and anti-personnel mines were laid along every kilometre of the front. For the first time the AT artillery density reached 41 guns per kilometre. In addition, field guns and anti-aircraft guns were brought up for use against tanks. It was already impossible to break through such a front. Nevertheless, the German command decided to try to do so. But, they were only able to bring together a million men and officers to carry out the operation, and they were unable to achieve surprise. On the night of 5 June a reconnaissance group from one of the thousands of Soviet battalions captured a German lance-corporal who had been clearing a passage through barbed wire obstacles. The Soviet battalion was immediately put on the alert and the second officer on its staff decided to inform the regimental intelligence officer of what had happened. The regiment was brought to battle readiness straight away and the news of the capture of the lance-corporal was transmitted to the intelligence group of the divisional staff and from there to the staff of the corps, to the staff of the 13th Army, straight from there to the Central Front headquarters and thence to the Headquarters of the Strategic Direction, to Marshal Zhukov and finally to the Chief Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff. It took twenty-seven minutes for the message to pass from the battalion staff to the Chief Intelligence Directorate. The news was astonishing. If the enemy was clearing passages through barbed wire, he must be preparing to advance. But only an immense offensive could be contemplated against such a mighty defensive system. And immense it was--but it ended in complete disaster.

The Distorting Mirror

1

At the time of the siege of Sevastopol, Nicholas I attempted to make the shameful Crimean war seem more acceptable. But nothing came of his efforts: the Russian newspapers printed not what the government wanted but what their journalists saw with their own eyes. More than that--it was not only journalists who wrote in the Russian newspapers and journals about the war but officers of the Russian army--actual participants in the war.

Lev Tolstoy, then a very young officer, wrote *Sevastopol Stories*, in which, in contrast to the government's propaganda, he described the war as he saw it for himself. At that time, of course, there was no freedom, let alone democracy. Yet, surprisingly, the young officer was not hanged, or disembowelled with a ramrod or banished to Siberia--he was not even dismissed from the army. He continued his military career, most successfully.

Tolstoy was not an exception. Look at the newspapers from that time and you will be surprised to see how Russian officers, even generals, wrote in almost every issue criticising their own government for lethargy and clumsiness and for their inability to rule the country or direct the army. Lev Tolstoy stood out from all the critics of the regime only because he was more talented than the rest.

During the Russo-Japanese war the Tsarist government tried once again to make the war seem attractive. It was hopeless. The Russian newspapers totally rejected all attempts to embroider reality. They published not what the Tsar wanted but what eye-witnesses had seen. One of them, an uneducated sailor from the battleship *Orel*, Novikov, gathered a mass of material about the blunders of the Russian Naval Staff and of the admirals who had taken part in the war and, without any fear of the consequences, began to publish it. It sold like hot cakes and Novikov made a lot of money out of his criticisms of the Russian government and of the Tsar himself. Did they cut off his head? Not at all; he bought a large house by the sea in Yalta, right next door to the Tsar, and lived there, writing his books, the best of which is *Tsushima*.

By the time of the First World War, the government was no longer making any great efforts to colour reality. A certain Vladimir Ulyanov, a student who had not obtained his degree, and who concealed his identity behind the pseudonym 'Lenin', began to publish Communist newspapers, in editions of millions, exposing every attempt to mislead the public. His newspapers were free, although it cost millions of gold roubles to print them. Where did such a half-educated man lay his hands on so much money?

But then the anarchy came to an end. The Tsar was overthrown, the bourgeoisie were driven off and the people inherited everything. Publishing houses, being large undertakings, were immediately nationalised. From then on the newspapers began to contain not whatever might come into someone's head but what the people really needed, and whatever would benefit the people. Since, naturally, the people as a whole cannot run a newspaper, it is run by the best representatives of the people. They take great care that no one uses the newspapers against the people. If a young officer, an uneducated sailor or a student without a degree should approach the editors, these representatives would immediately ask--do our people need this? Is it necessary to frighten or disillusion them? Should they be corrupted? Perhaps it is not such immature, subjective writings, which are detrimental to the popular interests which should be published, but what the people need.

That is how things developed--if an article or story did not serve the people's interests it was not published in the people's newspapers. Everything had been nationalised, everything belonged to the people. That being so, why should their representatives waste public money on the publication of a harmful article or a story?

It is said that nationalised undertakings belong to the whole community. But try sitting in the compartment of a nationalised train without a ticket--you will be made to get out and will be fined. In other words, the nationalised railways are not yours or mine or his or ours. They belong to the people who run it--in the final instance, to the government. The same applies to a nationalised newspaper. It, too, belongs to the government. In the Soviet Union all newspapers are nationalised and thus all belong to the government. Is it necessary for the government to criticise its own actions in its own newspaper? That is the reason why there is absolutely no criticism of the government in the Soviet newspapers. That is why no unqualified student would be

able, nowadays, to voice criticisms of any representative of the Soviet people. On the other hand, the government has acquired excellent facilities to publish anything they wish, without risking public exposure; the whole press now belongs to it. And it is this freedom from control which allows the government and all its institutions to make daily, even hourly, use of an exceptionally powerful and effective weapon--bluff.

2

Soviet leaders use bluff on a large scale in international politics and they use it in masterly fashion. They employ it with particular skill in the military field: everything is secret--just try to find out what is true and what is not.

During the Cuban crisis Khrushchev threatened to reduce capitalism to ashes by pressing a button; this was at a time when Soviet rockets were still blind, having completely unreliable guidance systems, which meant that they could only be launched on strictly limited courses, otherwise no one could be sure where they would end up.

After Khrushchev all work directed at deception of the enemy was centralised. I have already mentioned the Chief Directorate for Strategic Deception, which is commanded by General N. V. Ogarkov. Here is an example of its work.

The Soviet Union had been alarming the rest of the world with its rockets for some time before the United States began to deploy a system for anti-missile defence. For the Soviet Union this American system was like a knife at its throat--because of it Soviet rockets had lost much of their power to terrorise. The USSR was quite simply unable to deploy its own similar system and it had no intention of doing so--it does not hold defensive systems in any great esteem. But it was essential somehow to stop the Americans.

So the whole Soviet (nationalised) press began saying--in unison--`We have been working on this question for a long time and we have had some success'. Then, casually, they showed the whole world some lengths of film showing one rocket destroying another. A very primitive trick. A circus clown who knows the precise trajectory characteristics of a rocket and its launch-time could hit it with an airgun. If a trick like this was shown to Soviet schoolchildren in a circus, they would not be taken in. They would know quite well that there are no miracles and that the clown must have fixed it somehow. In Western capitals, too, they knew that there are no miracles, and that until the US gave the USSR computers no system of the sort could be built there.

But the tricks continued. A gigantic rocket appeared in a Moscow parade, not in the contingent from the Strategic Rocket Forces but in that of the National Air Defence Forces--obviously, therefore, it must be an anti-ballistic missile. Finally, the USSR set about erecting a most important building--an ABM guidance station. A station of this sort built by the Americans would be fully automated, needing a team of more than a thousand, with high engineering qualifications, to run it. This station looks like the Pyramid of Cheops, although it is much larger.

They began to build it right in the outskirts of Moscow, directly on the ring-road round the capital. Let all the foreign diplomats take a good look at it. Occasionally incomprehensible high-powered signals would be transmitted by the station which careful analysis showed to be exactly the sort of signals such a station would transmit. But, inside, the building was empty, without its most essential component--a computer and command complex.

However, the dimensions of the building, the incomprehensible transmissions, the lengths of film and various dark hints dropped by Soviet generals produced the required effect. And the Soviet press provided further evidence--defence against

missiles, it said, is a very expensive and not very effective business, although we are putting every effort into it. Soviet intelligence agents suddenly received orders to suspend all their efforts to acquire information on American ABM systems. The display of such disrespect for and such lack of interest in America's first-class electronic industry was calculated to indicate clearly that the Soviet Union enjoyed enormous superiority in this field. The West's nerve failed and the SALT I talks followed. At the signing ceremony the American President sat at the conference table with Brezhnev--and signed. The world sighed with relief and applauded the treaty as a victory for common sense, as a step forward taken by two giants, together.

But did the American President know that he was sitting at the table with the head of an organisation which calls itself the Communist Party of the Soviet Union? Did he know that this organisation has shot 60 million people in its own country and that it has set itself the goal of doing the same throughout the world? Not even the American Mafia could dream of doing things on this scale. When he made his quick decision to hold talks with the ringleader of the most terrible band of gangsters in the history of civilisation, did he not realise that they might simply fool him, as they would a naive schoolchild? Did he take appropriate steps against this? Were his advisers sufficiently alert?

When, next day, the Soviet newspapers published photographs of the smiling faces of the participants in the conference, the Soviet Army could not believe its eyes. Imagine: the US President with his closest advisers, Brezhnev and--right behind Brezhnev--General Ogarkov!

Unbelievable! How could such a thing happen? What were the American presidential advisers thinking of? Did they learn nothing from Pearl Harbor? Could anyone be more negligent than these people were at the signing of this treaty? Why did none of them realise that behind Brezhnev there stood not the chief ideologist, not the Politburo member responsible for scientific research, not the Politburo member responsible for the world's largest military industrial system, not the Minister of Defence, not the Chief of the General Staff, not even the Commander-in-Chief of the National Air Defence Forces, who should be in charge of the anti-missile defence system? Why was nobody there except Ogarkov, head of the Chief Directorate of Strategic Deception? This Chief Directorate is the most powerful in the Soviet General Staff. It is even more powerful than either the First or the Second Chief Directorate. Strategic Deception is that part of the General Staff which is responsible for all military censorship--for all censorship in the fields of science, technology, economics and so forth. This directorate makes a careful study of everything that is known in the West about the Soviet Union and fabricates an enormous amount of material in order to distort the true picture. This most powerful organisation supervises all military parades and any military exercises at which foreigners are to be present, it is responsible for relations with the service attaches of all foreign countries, including those with 'fraternal' ties with the Soviet Union. This octopus-like organisation runs *Red Star*, *Soviet Union*, *Standard Bearer*, *Equipment and Armament* and a hundred other military newspapers and journals. The Military Publishing House of the Soviet Ministry of Defence is part of this Chief Directorate. Nothing can be published in the USSR without a permit from its head, no film can appear without one, not a single troop movement can take place without permission from the Chief Directorate, no rocket-base, no barracks--even for the troops of the KGB--can be built without its agreement, nor can a single factory, collective farm, pipe-line or railway be constructed without its prior permission. Everything in this huge country must be done in such a way that the enemy always has a false impression of what is going on. In some fields achievements are deliberately concealed; in others--as was done with antimissile defence--they are exaggerated out of all recognition. In addition, of

course, representatives of the Chief Directorate, helped by Soviet military intelligence, have recruited a collection of mercenary hack journalists abroad, through which it spreads false information, disguised as serious studies. Its representatives attend negotiations concerned with detente, peace, disarmament, etc. For instance, the head of the 7th Department of the Chief Directorate, Colonel-General Trusov, is a permanent member of the Soviet delegation attending the SALT O discussions. When the stakes were at their highest, the head of the Chief Directorate, General Ogarkov himself, joined the delegation. He made a brilliant success of the operation to fool the American delegation. For this he was made Chief of the General Staff and at the same time he was promoted to Marshal of the Soviet Union. It is significant that his predecessor, Kulikov, reached the rank of Marshal only when he left the General Staff.

Ogarkov's presence in the delegation produced no reaction. The American delegation did not break off the negotiations when he appeared, did not leave the conference hall as a sign of protest, did not slam the door. On the contrary, it was his arrival which got the talks, which had come to a standstill, going again, after which they moved quickly to a triumphant conclusion. Both sides exchanged applause and threw their cards on the table, having agreed on a drawn game.

But, for heaven's sake, if the agreement was shortly going to halt the further growth of anti-missile systems, if the game was almost over, surely this was the moment to take a peep at the enemy's cards? Just as a precaution, against what might happen in the future? What was the point of simply signing the agreement, after which nothing could be put right, without letting a small group from each side catch a brief glimpse of things as they were in the enemy camp? The agreement should not have been signed without some arrangement of this sort.

Or if only, once the agreement had been signed, the Soviets had shown their American opposite numbers something, not a film in a cinema, but something real--in the most general terms, by all means, and without giving any details away. The Soviet delegation, too, would have been not uninterested to see something of the American achievements. But the Soviet card-sharpers knew in advance that the Americans had at least three aces in their hand, and that is why the Soviet side threw their cards on the table, without showing them, and quickly proceeded to shuffle the pack.

Incidentally, shortly after this, having exploited the credulity of America, the Soviet Union built an excellent rocket, with the industrial index number 8-K-84 and the military designation UR-100. UR means 'universal rocket'. It can be used both to deliver a nuclear strike and to repel one. It is the largest of the Soviet strategic rockets. Its manufacture is an out-and-out violation of the SALT I agreement, but no protest has come from the American side. This is because Ogarkov's organisation succeeded in concealing the rocket's second function, so that it is officially regarded as a purely offensive weapon. The SALT I agreement was got round in another way, too. An excellent Soviet anti-aircraft rocket, the S-200, which was developed to destroy enemy aircraft, was modernised and made suitable--with certain limitations--for use against enemy missiles. Ogarkov's organisation never allowed this rocket to appear at parades, even in its original, anti-aircraft variant. The Chief Directorate of Strategic Deception is strict in its observance of the principle: 'The enemy should see only what Ogarkov wishes to show them.' This is the reason why all foreign diplomats were enabled to see the huge construction right in the very outskirts of Moscow.

Ever since I first found myself in the West, I have been soaking up information of all kinds. I have visited dozens of libraries, seen hundreds of films. I have taken in everything, indiscriminately--James Bond, Emmanuelle, Dracula, the Emperor

Caligula, the Godfather, noble heroes and crafty villains. To someone who had only seen films about the need to fulfil production plans and to build a brighter future, it was impossible even to imagine such variety. I kept on and on going to films. One day I went to an excellent one about the burglary of a diamond warehouse. The thieves broke into the enormous building with great skill, put a dozen alarms out of action, opened enormously thick doors and finally reached the secret innermost room in which the safes stood. Of course, in addition to all the transmitters, alarm devices and so on, there were TV cameras, through which a guard kept constant watch on what was happening in the room where the safes were. But the thieves, too, were ingenious. They had with them a photograph of the room, taken earlier. They put this in front of the cameras and, using it as a screen, emptied the safes. The guards sensed that something was happening. They began to feel vaguely uneasy. But looking at the television screen they were able to convince themselves that everything was quiet in the safe room.

I am sometimes told that the American spy-satellites are keeping a careful watch on what is happening in the Soviet Union. They take infra-red photographs of the country from above and from oblique angles, their photographs are compared, electronic, heat and all other emissions are measured, radio transmissions are intercepted and painstakingly analysed. It is impossible to fool the satellites. When I hear this, I always think of the trio of sympathetic villains who hid from the cameras behind a photograph, using it as a shield behind which to fill their bags with diamonds. Incidentally, the film ended happily for the thieves. When I remember the cheerful smiles they exchanged at the end of their successful operation, I also think of Ogarkov's beaming countenance at the moment the agreement was signed.

The Chief Directorate of Strategic Deception does exactly what the sympathetic trio did--they show the watchful eye of the camera a reassuring picture, behind the shelter of which the gangsters who call themselves the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Army, Military Industry and so forth go about their business.

This is the way it is done in practice. A huge American computer, which has been installed at the Central Command Post of the Chief Directorate of Strategic Deception, maintains a constant record of all intelligence-gathering satellites and orbiting space stations and of their trajectories. Extremely precise short- and long-term forecasts are prepared of the times at which the satellites will pass over various areas of the Soviet Union and over all the other territories and sea areas in which the Armed Services of the USSR are active. Each Chief Directorate unit serving with a military district, a group of armies or a fleet makes use of data provided by this same American computer to carry out similar work for its own force and area. Each army, division and regiment receives constantly up-dated schedules showing the precise times at which enemy reconnaissance satellites will overfly their area, with details of the type of satellite concerned (photo-reconnaissance, signals intelligence, all-purpose, etc.), and the track it will follow. Neither the soldiers nor most of the officers know the precise reason for daily orders, like 'From 12.20 to 12.55 all radio transmissions are to cease and all radars are to be switched off', but they must obey them. At the same time, each division has several radio transmitters and radars which work only during this period and which are there solely to provide signals for the enemy's satellites.

The Chief Directorate has its own intelligence-gathering satellites, but, unlike those working for the Chief Intelligence Directorate, they maintain a watch over Soviet territory, looking constantly for radio transmitters and radars which fail to observe the timetables laid down for communication security. Severe punishments await divisional or regimental commanders who are found to be ignoring the timetables.

In addition to these bogus signals, the Chief Directorate is constantly organising nights by aircraft, tests of rockets, troop movements and other operations to take

place as the satellites' cameras pass overhead, with the aim of emphasising one aspect of activity while concealing others. Thus, in the period running up to the SALT I negotiations, every sort of attempt was made to present a picture of Soviet activity and success in anti-missile operations. After the negotiations, great pains were taken to hide activity and successes in this field, since these represented a violation of the agreements which had been reached. The Chief Directorate differs from our resourceful burglars in presenting false pictures not for a few hours but for decades. It has at its disposal not three crooks but tens of thousands of highly-qualified specialists and almost unlimited powers in its dealings with generals, marshals and those who run the military industries over the concealment of the true state of affairs.

There is no doubt that these activities enable the Politburo, without great difficulty, to empty the pockets of those in the West who will not understand that they are dealing with organised crime, committed by a state which is operating on a world-wide scale.

Part Three

Combat organisation

The Division

1

We have already seen that the unit known as a 'motor-rifle regiment' in the Soviet Army is in fact an all-arms unit with half the numerical strength of brigades in Western armies, which is nevertheless equal or even superior to the latter in fire-power and striking-power. This position is reached through the merciless exploitation of Soviet soldiers, who are regarded solely as fighting machines, rather than as human beings who require rest, good food, recreation and so forth.

Having a strength of 2,000, a motor-rifle regiment is equipped with 41 battle tanks, 3 reconnaissance tanks, 100 armoured personnel carriers, 6 130mm heavy assault guns, 18 122mm self-propelled howitzers, 6 'Grad-P' multiple rocket launchers, 18 self-propelled mortars, 18 automatic grenade launchers, 4 self-propelled anti-aircraft guns, 4 surface-to-air missile complexes, 100 light anti-aircraft and several hundred light anti-tank weapons, including the 'Mukha', and the RPG-16 anti-tank rocket launchers, both portable and mounted on vehicles, together with the requisite engineer, chemical warfare, medical, repair and other supporting sub-units.

A modern Soviet tank regiment is organised along almost exactly the same lines as a motor-rifle regiment, except that it has three tank battalions rather than one and one motor-rifle battalion instead of three. Its other sub-units are exactly the same: a battalion of self-propelled artillery, a battery of multiple rocket launchers, an anti-aircraft battery, reconnaissance, communications, engineering, chemical warfare and repair companies. The strength of such a regiment is 1,300. It has considerably fewer light anti-tank weapons than a motor-rifle regiment, reasonably enough in a regiment with a total of 97 tanks, since tank guns are the best of all anti-tank weapons.

2

A Soviet motor-rifle division is more of an all-arms unit than a motor-rifle regiment, containing, as it does, sub-units with the most varied functions and capabilities. The

organisation of a division is simple and well-balanced. The strength of a motor-rifle division is 13,000. It is commanded by a Major-General. It is made up of:

A headquarters staff.

A communications battalion--the division's nerve-system, used for communications with all its elements, with the higher command and with neighbouring divisions.

A reconnaissance battalion--the eyes and ears of the division.

A rocket battalion--the most powerful weapon in the hands of the divisional commander, with six launchers which can fire chemical and nuclear weapons for distances of up to 150 kilometres.

An independent tank battalion--the divisional commander's bodyguard, which protects divisional headquarters and the rocket battalion, and which can be used in battle when the divisional commander needs all his resources.

A tank regiment--the division's striking force.

Three motor-rifle regiments, two of which are equipped with armoured personnel carriers and light weapons and which attack on a wide front during an offensive, probing for weak spots in the enemy's defences. The third regiment, equipped with infantry combat vehicles and with heavy weapons, is used with the tank regiment to attack the enemy at his weakest point--`in the liver' as the Soviet Army says.

An artillery regiment--the main fire-power of the division--which consists of three battalions of 152 self-propelled howitzers and one battalion of BM-27 heavy multiple rocket launchers. In all, the regiment has 54 howitzers and 18 heavy rocket launchers. The full strength of the regiment is used in the division's main axis of advance, in which the tank and heavy motor-rifle regiments are also active--that is, in the area in which the enemy has been proved to be most vulnerable.

The anti-aircraft (SAM) regiment has as its primary task the protection of the divisional headquarters and of the rocket battalion. It must also provide protection for the division's main battle group, even though this is already capable of defending itself against enemy aircraft. The regiment has five batteries, each with six rocket launchers. In peacetime, two of the launchers of each battery are held in reserve and the fact that they exist must not in any circumstances be disclosed until the outbreak of war. This has led Western experts to underestimate the defence capabilities of Soviet divisions, believing that each regiment has only 20 launchers whereas in fact it has 30. In order to maintain this illusion, the armies of all the Soviet allies actually do have only 20 launchers in each regiment.

The anti-tank battalion acts as the divisional commander's trump card when he finds himself in a critical situation. Until then it is kept in reserve. It is brought into action during a defensive action, when the enemy's tanks have broken through fairly deeply and once the direction of his main thrust can be clearly identified. In an offensive it is used when the division's main battle force has broken through in depth and the enemy is attacking its flank and rear. The battalion is armed with 18 100 or 125mm anti-tank guns and six anti-tank missile complexes.

The engineer battalion is used, together with the anti-tank battalion, to lay minefields rapidly in front of enemy tanks which have broken through, in order to stop them or at least to slow them down in front of the division's anti-tank guns. It also clears mines ahead of the division's advancing troops during an offensive and helps them to cross water obstacles.

The chemical warfare battalion carries out the measures necessary for defence against nuclear, chemical or biological attacks by the enemy.

The transport battalion supplies the division with fuel and with ammunition. Its 200 vehicles enable it to move 1,000 tons of fuel and ammunition at the same time.

The repair battalion recovers and replaces combat equipment.

The medical battalion does the same, but for the division's personnel.

The helicopter flight, which has 6 helicopters, is used for command and communications duties and to land the division's diversionary troops behind the enemy's lines.

The division has a total of 34 battalions. Those battalions which are subordinated directly to the divisional commander are given the designation 'independent'--for instance 'Independent Communications Battalion of the 24th Division'. This system is also used in all higher formations. For instance, an Army consists of divisions. But it also contains regiments and battalions which do not form part of its complement, which are called 'independent' as, for instance in the '41st Independent Pontoon Bridge Regiment of the 13th Army'.

The total complement of a Soviet motor-rifle division is 287 tanks, 150 infantry combat vehicles, 221 armoured personnel carriers, 6 rocket launchers, 18 130mm heavy assault guns, 18 anti-tank guns, 126 self-propelled and towed howitzers, 96 mortars and multiple rocket launchers, 46 mobile anti-aircraft missile complexes, 16 self-propelled automatic anti-aircraft guns, and hundreds of light anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons.

3

A tank division is organised in the same way as a motor-rifle division, except that it has three tank regiments rather than one and one motor-rifle regiment instead of three. In addition, a tank division has no independent tank or anti-tank battalions, since its anti-tank strength is much greater than that of a motor-rifle division.

A tank division has 10,500 men. It is equipped with 341 tanks, 232 infantry combat vehicles, 6 rocket launchers, 6 heavy assault guns, 126 self-propelled howitzers, 78 mortars and multiple rocket launchers, 62 self-propelled anti-aircraft missiles and artillery complexes and hundreds of light anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons. While it has fewer personnel, a tank division has far greater striking power than a motor-rifle division.

The Army

1

Until the mid-1950s, divisions were organised in corps, and a number of corps made up an Army. However, because of the greatly increased combat strength of the divisions, and also because an Army Commander had acquired the means to control all his divisions simultaneously, the corps came to be considered unnecessary as an intermediate formation and was therefore abolished.

Today, however, a relatively small number of corps are left in the Soviet armed forces. They exist where a division is too small a unit for the task in hand and an Army too large.

From time to time in this book we have used the term 'All-Arms Army'. This has been done in order to distinguish this type of Army from Tank Armies, Air Armies, Air Defence Armies and Rocket Armies. However, in normal usage the expression 'all-arms' is not used; instead, the units concerned are simply referred to as the 13th or the 69th Army. Some have honorary titles, such as '2nd Shock Army' or '9th Guards Army'. These titles add nothing to the present-day strength of these armies--they are

simply reflections of past glory. For instance, the 3rd Army, which has no honorary title, is considerably better equipped than the 11th Guards Army.

Sometimes Armies evolve along new lines but keep their former designations, which do not fit their present functions. Thus, the 2nd Tank Army is now an All-Arms Army. By contrast, the 3rd Shock Army, despite its designation, is in fact a Tank Army.

During the Second World War the Red Army had a total of 18 Air Armies, 11 Air Defence Armies, 6 Guards Tank Armies, and 70 other armies, of which 5 were known as Shock Armies and 11 as Guards Armies.

Today there are fewer armies but their strengths vary considerably. The Soviet Armed Forces now have 3 Rocket Armies, 10 Air Defence Armies, 16 Air Armies, 8 Guards Tank Armies and 33 other armies, a number of which are still referred to as either Shock or Guards Armies.

2

In the West it is firmly believed that today's Soviet Armies lack a clear organisational structure. A superficial analysis of the complement of each of the Soviet Armies seems to confirm this: some Armies have 7 divisions while others have only 3. The proportion of tank and motor-rifle divisions which they contain also varies constantly.

In fact, though, Armies do have quite clear organisational structures. However, the Soviet Union does not think it advisable to display this clarity in peacetime; this would throw too much light on their plans for war. Divisions have a high degree of administrative autonomy and can be quickly regrouped from one Army to another. In peacetime the system certainly does seem illogical, but once a war began each Army would take on an entirely clear shape.

There is one further cause for this apparent confusion. This is that the Soviet Union has forbidden its East European allies to establish Armies in either peacetime or wartime. If a homogeneous mass becomes too large it may explode. The Soviet High Command avoids this danger within the Soviet Army itself, by constantly moving the various nationalities around, to produce a featureless grey mass of soldiery, unable to understand one another. In peacetime, the armed forces of the East European countries only have divisions. In wartime these divisions would immediately join Soviet Armies which were under strength. This is precisely what happened in the summer of 1968.

In peacetime, these East European divisions see themselves as part of their own national armed forces. In wartime they would be distributed throughout the Soviet Armies; for administrative purposes they would come under their national Ministries of Defence and, ultimately, under the Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. For military purposes they would be subordinated to the Soviet Armies, Fronts and Strategic Directions and, ultimately, to the Soviet Supreme Commander and to his General Staff. It is because of this that the Staff of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation is a bureaucratic institution rather than operational headquarters. And this is why, in peacetime, many Soviet Armies appear unstructured. In wartime they would be brought up to strength with East European contingents and they would then assume their proper forms.

3

In wartime an Army consists of five divisions, one of which is a tank division, and the remaining four motor-rifle divisions. In various instances in which the mass use of tanks would be difficult, an Army may have nothing but motor-rifle divisions, which

have only a limited number of tanks. But the Armies which are earmarked to operate in Western Europe are made up in this way--one tank and four motor-rifle divisions.

Besides these five divisions each Army has:

A headquarters staff--the brain of the Army.

A communications regiment--its nervous system.

An independent SPETSNAZ diversionary company and two signals intelligence battalions--its eyes and ears.

A rocket brigade--the most powerful weapon in the hands of the Army's commander, which enables him to deliver nuclear and chemical attacks. Earlier each brigade had 9 launchers, with a range of up to 300 kilometres. Today a brigade has 18 launchers, with a greatly increased range.

An independent tank battalion--the Army Commander's personal guard. This defends the Army's control post and the rocket brigade and is brought into action only in the most critical situations, when everything is at stake.

An artillery brigade--the main fire-power of the Army. This consists of five battalions--three with 18 130mm guns each, one with 18 152 mm gun-howitzers and one with 18 BM-27 multiple rocket launchers.

An anti-aircraft brigade, which covers the Army's command Post and Rocket Brigades with its fire and which also operates in the Army's main axis of advance, supplementing the anti-aircraft coverage which the divisions can provide for themselves. This brigade consists of a command battalion, a supply battalion and three fire-battalions, each with three batteries.

The camouflage service has decreed that one of the launchers in each of these batteries is never to show itself. It therefore appears to observers that these batteries consist of three launchers, whereas in fact they have four, one of which is always kept in reserve. An anti-aircraft brigade is therefore generally believed to have 27 launchers, whereas in fact it has 36.

An anti-aircraft regiment, which has 30 57mm S-60 anti-aircraft guns. Experience in Vietnam and in wars in the Middle East has shown that conventional anti-aircraft artillery has by no means outlived its usefulness and that there are many situations in which the effectiveness of anti-aircraft rockets falls off sharply and that anti-aircraft guns can supplement these most usefully.

An anti-tank regiment, which consists of three battalions. This has 57 heavy anti-tank guns and 18 anti-tank missile complexes.

An independent anti-tank battalion, which has 40 IT-1 tracked anti-tank rocket launchers. The existence of these battalions, and of the IT-1 itself, is a carefully guarded secret. These batteries do not form part of the anti-tank regiment, and there is a sound reason for this, since they carry out operations using quite different tactics. The independent anti-tank battalions, with their highly mobile launchers, harass the enemy constantly, making surprise attacks from vehicles and manoeuvring from area to area under the pressure exerted by the enemy's superior forces. Meanwhile the anti-tank regiment, armed with more powerful but less manoeuvrable guns, has the task of stopping the enemy tanks, at absolutely any cost, when they reach a previously defined line. Thus the more mobile battalion goes into action against the enemy's tanks from the moment the latter break through, while the anti-tank regiment, deep in the rear, is preparing an impassable barrier, behind which it will fight to the last man.

The helicopter squadron is used for communications and for control, and sometimes to land troops behind the enemy lines. It has 16 medium and 4 heavy helicopters.

The Army's supporting sub-units include:

An engineer regiment
A pontoon bridge regiment
An independent assault crossing battalion
A transport regiment
An independent pipe-laying battalion
A chemical warfare battalion
A medical battalion
A mobile tank-repair workshop, with a tank recovery company

In wartime the complement of an Army is 83,000. It has 1,541 tanks, 48 rocket launchers, 832 infantry combat vehicles, 1,100 armoured personnel carriers, 1,386 guns, mortars and multiple rocket launchers, 376 heavy anti-aircraft missile launchers and anti-aircraft guns, 40 transport helicopters and thousands of light anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons.

4

A Tank Army, like an All-Arms Army, has a permanent complement which is strictly observed. Its organisation is standardised with that of an All-Arms Army. It is therefore simpler not to list the rocket brigade, the diversionary company and so forth but simply to pick out the features which distinguish a Tank Army from an All-Arms Army. There are three such features:

(1) An All-Arms Army has five divisions, one of which is a tank division. A Tank Army has only four, all of which are tank divisions.

(2) A Tank Army does not break through the enemy's defences. This is done for it by the All-Arms Armies. Therefore a Tank Army does not have an artillery brigade, of which it has no need. But while it is operating deep in the defences of the enemy it may suddenly encounter strong enemy forces against which massed intense fire must be brought down very quickly. For this purpose, in place of an artillery brigade, a Tank Army has a regiment of BM-27 multiple rocket launchers.

(3) A Tank Army does not fight to hold areas or lines: its task is solely to attack the enemy. It therefore has no anti-tank regiment (which holds territory) or independent anti-tank battalion (which harasses the advancing enemy). It has no need of these sub-units, which would contribute nothing to its proper function.

In the near future there will be one further special feature in the organisation of a Tank Army. It will include an air-borne assault brigade, which has the function of seizing and holding bridges, crossing points and road junctions ahead of the avalanche of advancing tanks. At present only Fronts have these brigades. Temporarily, until they come into service, Tank Armies are forced to use motor-rifle regiments, or sometimes divisions, which have battalions with special training in helicopter assault landings. Once the air-borne assault brigades join the Tank Armies, the need for such motor-rifle regiments and divisions will disappear.

In all, in wartime, a Tank Army has 54,000 men, 1,416 tanks, 993 infantry combat vehicles, 894 guns, mortars and multiple rocket launchers, 42 rocket launchers, 314 heavy anti-aircraft missile launchers and anti-aircraft guns, 64 combat and 34 transport helicopters and thousands of light anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons.

5

If we compare the weapons available to an All-Arms Army with those of a tank Army, we discover an apparently paradoxical situation; the Tank Army has fewer tanks than the All-Arms Army, but more infantry combat vehicles than the latter, whose very foundation is its motor-rifle sub-units!

In fact, though, this is not a paradox. An All-Arms Army is a combination of tanks, of heavy and light motorised infantry, artillery and other forces whose job is *to break through the enemy's lines*.

A Tank Army is far smaller than an All-Arms Army. It is a combination of tanks and heavy infantry, with artillery and operational helicopter sub-units, whose job it is *to operate deep in the enemy's rear*.

An All-Arms Army has more than 1,000 armoured personnel carriers (for light infantry) and a Tank Army has practically none.

A Tank Army, being smaller, has far better cross-country performance, and greater manoeuvrability and striking power. It has fewer tanks than an All-Arms Army, but they are far more highly concentrated. This gives the Tank Army a clearly defined offensive character, while the All-Arms Army is essentially a universal weapon.

The Front

1

The Front is a group of Armies, unified under a single command to carry out combat operations in wartime. It is set up either during or immediately before the outbreak of a war. It is an all-arms formation in every respect, incorporating elements of the various Armed Services.

The Commander of a Front has an operational, not an administrative function. He possesses very considerable authority and the forces under his command are not subordinate to the Commanders-in-Chief of their respective Services. The different Services from which the forces making up a Front are drawn are not permitted to interfere in the operational use of these forces. A Front Commander has sole and personal responsibility for the preparation, conduct and outcome of combat operations. He is subordinated either to the Commander-in-Chief of a Strategic Direction who is in control of operations or directly to the Supreme Commander himself. The Armed Services from which the forces making up a Front are taken are concerned only with the reinforcement, reequipment, provisioning and supply of these forces.

This clear differentiation between operational and administrative functions makes it possible to concentrate complete authority in individual hands, to avoid duplication of control, to ensure proper cooperation between sub-units of different Armed Services and to avoid friction between them.

At the beginning of the war between the Soviet Union and Germany, five Fronts were created. In the course of the war their number was increased to fifteen. During its final stages the Fronts operating in the Central Direction were made up of 1 or 2 Air Armies, 2 or 3 Tank Armies, 8 or 9 All-Arms Armies and a considerable number of independent tank, artillery and motor-rifle corps. These Fronts had strengths of up to a million soldiers, three thousand tanks, three thousand aircraft, and up to fifteen thousand guns and mortars.

2

After the war, because of the introduction of nuclear weapons and as part of the continuous technical improvement of the Armed Forces, it was decided that in any future war more powerful, more compact and therefore more easily controlled Fronts would be used.

Contrary to the belief held in the West, Fronts have a quite clearly defined combat organisation, like battalions, regiments, divisions and armies.

A Front comprises:

A command staff.

A communications regiment--the nerve system.

A diversionary 'SPETSNAZ' brigade, a signals intelligence regiment and a radar battlefield surveillance regiment--the eyes and ears of the Front.

An Air Army.

A Tank Army--the Front's striking force.

Two All-Arms Armies.

An independent tank brigade--the Front Commander's personal guard, which defends his command post and the Front's rocket brigades. This brigade is only brought into action in the most critical situations.

Two rocket brigades. One has 12 launchers with a range of 9-1,200 kilometres and is used in accordance with the plans of the Front Commander. The second brigade is similar in composition and armament to an Army's rocket brigade and is used to strengthen the Army which is having the greatest success.

An artillery division, consisting of six regiments and an anti-tank battalion. Three of the regiments have 54 130mm M46 guns each and two of the remainder have 54 152mm D20 howitzers each. The other regiment has 54 240mm mortars. The artillery division, in its entirety, is used, to strengthen the artillery of the Army which is having the greatest success.

A specially strengthened artillery brigade, consisting of five battalions. The first three each have 12 180mm S-23 guns, the other two each have 12 203mm B-4M howitzers. The brigade is used to strengthen the Army which is having the greatest success.

A tank-destroyer brigade, of five battalions, armed with 90 heavy anti-tank guns and 30 anti-tank rocket complexes.

Two anti-aircraft missile brigades and two anti-aircraft artillery regiments, equipped and organised like similar sub-units in an Army.

An airborne assault brigade, used for the rapid capture of important lines, bridges, crossings and mountain passes in support of the Front's advancing forces. In the next few years commanders of the Tank Armies of a Front will also each have one such brigade.

Several penal battalions, which are used to negotiate minefields and for attacks on strongly fortified enemy positions. The number of penal battalions available depends on the numbers of soldiers and officers who are unwilling to fight for socialism.

The supporting sub-units include:

An engineer brigade.

A pontoon bridge brigade.

An assault-crossing battalion.

A transport brigade.

A pipe-laying regiment.

A CW protection regiment.

Several field and evacuation hospitals.

A mobile tank repair workshop.

A tank transport regiment.

In territories in which it is difficult to use tanks, a Front will have no Tank Armies. Instead of these it may have an independent tank division but it may not have this either. This does not, of course, apply to Western Europe.

Fronts earmarked for operations in Western Europe will have up to 5,600 tanks, 772 combat aircraft, 220 helicopters, 3,000 infantry combat vehicles, 3,000 armoured personnel carriers, and up to 4,100 guns, mortars and salvo-firing rocket-launchers together with a large quantity of other arms and combat equipment.

3

It will, of course, be pointed out that the forces stationed on East German territory are precisely twice as strong as those I have listed, having:

Not one Tank Army, but two

An Air Army which has a considerably larger number of aircraft than I have shown

Two airborne assault brigades, rather than one

Not one diversionary brigade, but two

Four rocket brigades, instead of two

Two engineer brigades, not one

Two pontoon bridge brigades, rather than one

An artillery division which has more than 700 guns, as against the 324 listed above

How can this be explained? There is nothing mysterious about it. A Front advancing against a strong enemy may have a zone of advance of 200-250 kilometres. In East Germany there is thus room for two Fronts. In Czechoslovakia there is room for only one.

Two routes lead from East Germany to the West, separated from each other by a considerable distance. Because of this, it is convenient to employ two different Fronts; control over a single Front advancing in two different directions is bound to produce difficulties. If the Soviet forces are supplemented with East German units there will be precisely two Fronts in the GDR. No publicity is given to this intention in peacetime, in order to keep it secret. Besides, it is quite simply inconvenient to keep two generals of equal seniority in the same country. For the senior Soviet officer in the GDR is not only a military commander, he is also the administrative head of a Communist colony. For this reason the staffs of the Fronts are unified, although even for annual exercises they separate, as do the Air Armies and the artillery divisions. A single telephone call is all that is needed to set up two separate fronts--everything else has been arranged already.

Why are there 20 Soviet Divisions in Germany, but only 5 in Czechoslovakia?

1

The Soviet Union maintains 10 motor-rifle, 1 artillery and 9 tank divisions in East Germany. In Poland it has 2 tank divisions, in Czechoslovakia it has 2 tank and 3 motor-rifle divisions. In the Byelorussian Military District, which borders on Poland, it has 9 tank and 4 motor-rifle divisions; Poland has 5 tank and 8 motor-rifle divisions, Czechoslovakia has 5 tank and 5 motor-rifle divisions.

At first sight, these figures seem to be an arbitrary and nonsensical jumble.

However, let us recall the basic fact that the East European divisions, brigades and regiments are not permitted to form their own Armies or Fronts. They simply form parts of various Soviet Armies, taking the place of missing elements. We should therefore not regard Soviet and East European divisions as separate entities. Instead, we should see them as forces of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, without national distinctions. Once we do this, we see an entirely harmonious picture.

Let us take Czechoslovakia as an example. In Prague there is a Soviet Colonel-General, who commands the Central Group of Forces. Under him are the staffs of an Air Army and of two All-Arms Armies. The Air Army has a complement of only 150 Soviet combat aircraft, but, if we add to these 500 Czech combat aircraft, we have a complete Air Army, with a Soviet general at its head.

Altogether in Czechoslovakia there are 7 tank and 8 motor-rifle divisions. This is exactly the number needed to make up a Front. 4 of the tank divisions constitute a Tank Army. 2 of the remaining tank divisions and the 8 motor-rifle divisions form two Armies and the remaining tank division acts as a reserve. In peacetime, Czechoslovakia has two artillery brigades and two anti-tank regiments. This is exactly what is needed to complete two Armies, but the Tank Army does not need these sub-units. Czechoslovakia has three rocket brigades and this is precisely what is needed--one brigade for each Army, including the Tank Army. All the front-line sub-units are Soviet.

The Soviet Colonel-General in Prague is the Commander of the Central Front. The commanders of the Air Army and of the two All-Arms Armies are also Soviet, while the divisions, brigades and regiments are both Soviet and Czech, but all are entirely under Soviet control. Already in peacetime, there is a complete Front in Czechoslovakia; only one element is lacking--a headquarters staff for the Tank Army. Everything else is there. However, five hundred kilometres from the Soviet-Czech frontier, in the small Ukrainian town of Zhitomir, is the staff of the 8th Guards Tank Army. This staff has no one under its command. So that the generals should not become bored, they frequently make trips to Czechoslovakia to inspect the tank divisions. Then they return home. All that would be needed to move them to Czechoslovakia is a two-hour flight by passenger aircraft. Once this is done the Central Front is ready for battle.

In Warsaw, too, there is a Soviet Colonel-General. He also has at his disposal the headquarters staff of an Air Army (the 37th Air Army which has 360 combat aircraft) but he has only two Soviet tank divisions. There are no staffs for land armies, for it would be odd to have three Army staffs for two tank divisions. So the Soviet Colonel-General has a huge staff in Legnica on which there are sufficient generals to form both the headquarters staff of a Front and those of three Armies. And in Poland, too, there are just the right number of divisions to form a Front--7 tank and 8 motor-rifle. As in Czechoslovakia, there are 4 tank divisions--a Tank Army--2 tank and 8 motor-rifle divisions--two Armies--and one tank division, to act as a reserve. There are exactly the number of auxiliary sub-units needed for the Front and for the Armies from which it is made up. The number of combat aircraft is sufficient to reinforce both the 37th Air Army and the Air Army in Czechoslovakia.

In peacetime there is already a complete Front in Poland; it needs no further strengthening. The transformation of the Soviet staff in Legnica into a headquarters staff for a Front and staffs for three Land Armies can take place automatically. In 1968 it was completed in a matter of minutes. What appears to be one staff, in fact, functions, even in peacetime, as four independent staffs; they are all located in one place in order to camouflage this fact.

In East Germany there are two Fronts. The overall total of Soviet and East German aircraft is precisely the number needed to make up two Air Armies. The staff of the

16th Air Army is already stationed in East Germany; that of the 1st Air Army can be brought from Byelorussia in a single transport aircraft within a couple of hours and once this has been done the two Fronts have their complete contingent.

In peacetime, there are two Tank Army staffs in East Germany--each Front has one--and three staffs for All-Arms Armies. In other words, one more is needed. This, too--the staff of the 28th Army--would come from Byelorussia, in a single aircraft and within two hours. There would then be two Fronts, each with one Air Army, one Tank Army and Two All-Arms Armies. The move of the staffs can be accomplished so quickly because it is only necessary to move five generals and twelve colonels for each staff--the remainder are already in East Germany.

In all, there are 1 tank and 14 motor-rifle divisions in East Germany. Each Front needs a minimum of 6 tank and 8 motor-rifle divisions. Thus only three more divisions are needed and they, too, would come from Byelorussia. This would take twenty-four hours. The two Fronts could begin combat operations without them and they, too, would be in action within a day.

But what about poor Byelorussia, robbed of the staff of an Air Army, the staff of an All-Arms Army and three divisions--one tank and two motor-rifle? She has plenty left.

To be specific, she has a Colonel-General and his staff, two rocket brigades, two anti-aircraft SAM brigades, a diversionary brigade, an airborne assault brigade, the staffs of the 5th and 7th Guards Tank Armies and eight tank divisions--four with each Tank Army.

2

With a very small number of moves--three Army staffs and three divisions--we have produced a structure which has the precision and harmony of a mathematical formula.

We now have the following picture:

In the first echelon there are three Fronts, two in East Germany, one in Czechoslovakia.

In the second echelon--one Front in Poland. In the third echelon--a Group of Tank Armies.

The seaward flank is covered by the Soviet Baltic Fleet which in wartime would incorporate all the ships of the Polish and East German Navies.

At the head of each of these formations is a Commander. Above him is the Commander-in-Chief, whose headquarters is at Zossen-Wünsdorf. There could be no better place for a headquarters anywhere in the world. It is very close to West Berlin which, with its immediate surroundings would, of course, be immune from Western nuclear attacks. The C-in-C makes use of West Berlin as a hostage and as a safeguard; he is thoroughly protected against conventional weapons by concrete shelters and by Tank Armies.

Each Army has one tank and four motor-rifle divisions. Each Tank Army has four tank divisions. Each Front has one Air Army, one Tank Army and two All-Arms Armies. The Group of Tank Armies has two Tank Armies. In all, each Front has six tank and eight motor-rifle divisions. There are a total of six Tank Armies and eight All-Arms Armies. The Strategic Direction has four Fronts (All-Arms) and one Group of Tank Armies.

The Armies of this Strategic Directorate have a total of 32 tank divisions and 32 motor-rifle divisions.

In addition, the C-in-C of the Western Strategic Direction has at his disposal two tank divisions, one in Poland, the other in Czechoslovakia and two airborne divisions (the 6th Polish and the 103rd Guards division, which is in Byelorussia).

Also at the disposal of the C-in-C of the Strategic Direction are a diversionary long-range reconnaissance SPETSNAZ regiment, a regiment of pilotless 'Yastreb' reconnaissance aircraft, a Guards communications brigade, a transport brigade, a division of railway troops, a pipe-laying brigade, a CW protection brigade, an engineer brigade, a pontoon bridge brigade and other sub-units.

For the duration of a particular operation he may have temporary command of:

One Corps from the Strategic Rocket Forces

One--or in some cases all three--Corps from the Long Range Air Force

One Army from the National Air Defence Forces

The whole of Military Transport Aviation

3

The Western Strategic Directorate is the mightiest grouping of forces on this planet. It has the task of breaking through the West's defences to rescue the West Europeans from the fetters of capitalism. The plan for its operational use is simple--a simultaneous attack by all three Fronts. The Front which is most successful will be immediately strengthened by the addition of the second echelon Front from Poland, which has the task of smashing through the enemy's defences, after which the Group of Tank Armies will be used to widen the breach, supported by parachute drops by the airborne divisions. Divisions which suffer heavy losses will not be reinforced but will be immediately withdrawn from battle and replaced by fresh divisions from the Moscow, Volga or Urals Military Districts. In the event of a breakthrough into France, the Western Strategic Direction may be allocated a further Group of Tank Armies, which is located in the Kiev Military District in peacetime and is made up of the 3rd and 6th Guards Tank Armies.

It must be emphasised that the task of the C-in-C of the Western Strategic Direction is to advance swiftly westwards and to concentrate all his efforts on this and this alone. He is covered on the south by neutral Austria and Switzerland, which, it is planned, will be liberated somewhat later, while on the north of the Strategic Directorate lie the West German 'Land' of Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark. A plan has been devised to prevent the forces of the Directorate from moving northwards as well as westwards. The Baltic Military District will become the Baltic Front in wartime. It will not come under the command of the Western Strategic Directorate but will be independent--in other words it will be subordinated directly to the Supreme Commander. This Front will cross Polish territory into Germany and will deploy northwards, with the task of covering the northern flank of the Western Strategic Directorate, of liberating Denmark and of seizing the Baltic Straits. Because it will have to work on a very narrow front and to carry out operations on islands, the composition of the Front has been somewhat modified. It will include:

The 30th Air Army

The 9th and 11th Guards Armies, each consisting of one tank division and of three motor-rifle divisions instead of four

One tank division, rather than a Tank Army

An artillery division and all the remaining units which ordinarily constitute a Front.

As compensation for the divisions it lacks, the Front has one most unusual component--a Polish marine infantry division. In addition, the Soviet 107th Guards Airborne Division will operate in support of the Front, although it will not be subordinated to it.

To the North another Front will operate, independently of any Strategic Direction, subordinated directly to the Supreme Commander. This Front will be established on the base provided by the Leningrad Military District. It will be made up of one Air Army, two All-Arms Armies and an independent tank division. An airborne division based in the Leningrad Military District, but not subordinated to it, will provide operational support. This Front will operate against Norway and, possibly, Sweden.

The Organisation of the South-Western Strategic Direction

1

The South-Western Strategic Direction stands shoulder to shoulder with the Western and is organised in exactly the same way: three Fronts in the first echelon, one Front in the second echelon, a Group of Tank Armies in the third echelon, and a seaward flank protected by the Black Sea Fleet, which would be joined in wartime by all the ships of the Bulgarian and Romanian navies.

Unlike its Western equivalent, the South-Western Strategic Direction covers terrain which is unsuitable for the deployment of a large quantity of tanks. In addition, of course, the enemy is not as strong here as he is in the West. The Fronts of the South-Western Strategic Direction therefore have no Tank Armies. Each Front consists of an Air Army and two All-Arms Armies.

The staffs for all the Armies are brought from military districts in the USSR. In order to examine the structure of this Strategic Direction, we will do two things: we will assume five Bulgarian tank brigades to equal two tank divisions--an equation which any military specialist will confirm is reasonable. We will also move one Soviet motor-rifle division forward just 200 metres from the town of Uzhgorod on to Hungarian territory. We will then have the following picture:

In Hungary there are 3 tank and 8 motor-rifle divisions. The Front there will consist of two Armies each of 1 tank and 4 motor-rifle divisions, with 1 tank division in reserve.

In Romania there are 2 tank and 8 motor-rifle divisions--these will also form a Front of two standard Armies together with an Air Army.

In Bulgaria there are 2 tank and 8 motor-rifle divisions.

In the second echelon is the Carpathian Military District, consisting of the 58th Air Army and the 13th and 38th Armies. We already know that the staff of the 8th Guards Tank Army has no one under its command and is to move to Czechoslovakia in the event of war. Having made this assumption and after moving one motor-rifle division forward 200 metres, the Front will have 3 tank and 8 motor-rifle divisions--2 Armies with one division in reserve.

Finally, in the third echelon, there is the Kiev Military District, in which are located the staff of the C-in-C of the Strategic Direction and the Group of Tank Armies (the 3rd and 6th Guards Tank Armies, with a total complement of 8 tank divisions).

In reserve the C-in-C has two tank divisions (in Hungary and Czechoslovakia) four motor-rifle divisions and the 102nd Guards Airborne division. In addition he has a diversionary regiment and the variety of supporting formations and units which the C-in-C of the Western Strategic Direction also has.

Of course, it is no accident that the Group of Tank Armies is located in the Kiev Military District. From here the Group can move quickly forward to the Front by which it is most needed. But it could also be quickly brought under the command of the

Western Strategic Direction and, by violating the neutrality of Austria from Hungary, could attack the undefended Austro-German frontier.

2

The proportions laid down for the South-Western Direction are observed as precisely as those of its Western counterpart.

In each Army there are 4 motor-rifle divisions and 1 tank division. In the Strategic Direction there are 4 All-Arms Fronts and 1 Group of Tank Armies.

In each Front there are 2 tank and 8 motor-rifle divisions. In all there are 2 Tank Armies and 8 All-Arms Armies made up of 16 tank and 32 motor-rifle divisions. You will recall that in the Western Direction there are 32 tank and 32 motor-rifle divisions.

The South-Western Strategic Direction can be strengthened with forces from the Odessa and North Caucasus Military Districts.

Part Four Mobilisation

Types of Division

1

The Soviet Army is armed with dozens of types of artillery weapons: guns, howitzers, gun-howitzers, and howitzer-guns, ordinary and automatic mortars, multi-barrelled, salvo-firing rocket launchers, anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns. In each of these classes of weapons there is a whole array of models--from very small to very large--and most of these exist in many variants--self-propelled, auxiliary-propelled, towed, assault, mountain and static.

But despite the wide variety of artillery systems, all of these have one feature in common; no matter how many men there are in the crew of a gun--three or thirty--only two qualified specialists--the commander and the gunlayer--are needed. All the rest of the crew can perform their duties without any kind of specialised training. Any No 2 loader, rammer number, fuse-setter, ammunition handler or other member of a gun's crew, can have his duties explained in three minutes and the crew can be working like automata within a few hours. The same applies to the driver of a self-propelled gun or of a gun tractor. If he was previously a tractor driver he too will quickly master his new functions.

Soviet generals know that it is possible to teach a bear to ride a bicycle--and very quickly. Why, they reason, do we need to maintain a peacetime army of hundreds of thousands of soldiers whose wartime tasks would be so simple? Surely it is easier to replace the thirty men in a two-gun howitzer platoon with five--the platoon commander, two gun-commanders and two loaders and to moth-ball both guns and their tractors? If war comes, the others--the bears--can be trained very quickly. For the present let them occupy themselves with peaceful work--casting steel (armoured, of course) or building electrical power-stations (for the production of aluminium, which is used only for military purposes in the USSR).

2

In peacetime the great majority of Soviet artillery regiments, brigades and divisions therefore have only 5% of the soldiers they would need in wartime. Only those units (an insignificant minority) stationed in the countries of Eastern Europe or on the Chinese frontier are up to full strength.

This principle applies not only to the artillery but to most of the land forces and indeed to the bulk of the whole Soviet Armed Forces. It is almost impossible to apply it to certain categories--to tank forces or to submarines say. But it does apply in many cases, particularly to the infantry, to the marine infantry, to repair, transport and engineer sub-units and to units manning Fortified Areas.

Because of this, the enormous Soviet land forces, with their peacetime strength of 183 divisions as well as a very large number of independent brigades, regiments and battalions, have a laughably small numerical strength--little more than one and a half million men.

This astonishingly small figure is deceptive. Simply bringing the existing divisions and the independent brigades, regiments and battalions up to strength on the first day of mobilisation will raise the strength of the land forces to 4,100,000. But this is just the first stage of mobilisation.

3

Soviet divisions are divided into three categories, depending on the number of 'bears' absent in peacetime:

Category A--divisions which have 80% or more of their full strength

Category B--those with between 30% and 50%

Category C--those with between 5% and 10%

Some Western observers use categories 1, 2 and 3 in referring to Soviet divisions. This does not affect the crux of the matter, but is not quite accurate. Categories 1 to 3 are used in the USSR only when referring to military districts. Divisions are always referred to by letters of the alphabet. This is because it is simpler to use letters in secret abbreviations. For instance, '213 C MRD' refers to the 213th motor-rifle division, which falls in category C. The use of a numerical category in such a message could lead to confusion. In referring to military districts, which have titles but no numbers, it is more convenient to use figures to indicate categories.

Some Western observers overestimate the number of soldiers on the strength of category B and C divisions. In fact there are considerably fewer soldiers than it would appear to an outside observer. These overestimates presumably result from the fact that in many military camps, in addition to the personnel of divisions which are below strength, there are other sub-units and units, also below strength but not included in the complement of the division. The Soviet land forces have some 300 independent brigades, more than 500 independent regiments and some thousands of independent battalions and companies, which do not belong to divisions. In most cases their personnel are quartered in the barracks of divisions which are below strength, which gives a misleading impression of the strength of the division itself. In many cases, too, for camouflage purposes, these sub-units wear the insignia of the divisions with which they are quartered. This applies primarily to rocket, diversionary and reconnaissance/intelligence personnel but is also the case with units concerned with the delivery, storage and transport of nuclear and chemical weapons.

About a third of the divisions in the Soviet Army fall into category A. They include all divisions stationed abroad and a number of divisions on the Chinese frontier.

Categories B and C, too, account for approximately a third of all Soviet divisions. In recent years there has been a constant shift of divisions from category B to category C, because of the introduction of such new arms of forces as airborne assault troops and fortified area troops. The new sub-units and units need entirely new troops, which are always taken from category B divisions. They cannot be taken from category A divisions, because these represent the minimum number of troops who must be kept at readiness, or from category C divisions because these have no one to spare.

It must also be noted that in category B divisions the three most important battalions--rocket, reconnaissance and communications are kept at category A strength. In category C divisions these battalions are maintained at category B strength.

The same applies to similar sub-units serving with Armies and Fronts. All rocket, reconnaissance, diversionary and communications sub-units of Armies and Fronts are maintained at a strength one category higher than that of all the other elements of the particular Army or Front.

4

It must be emphasised that the category allocated to a division has no effect whatsoever upon the extent to which it is supplied with new weapons. Divisions stationed abroad, which are all, without exception, in category A, take second place when new combat equipment is being issued.

The newest equipment is issued first of all to the frontier Military Districts--Baltic, Byelorussian, Carpathian, Far Eastern and Trans-Baykal.

Only five or seven, sometimes even ten years after a particular piece of equipment has first been issued, is it supplied to divisions stationed abroad. Third to be supplied, after them, are the Soviet Union's allies. Once the requirements of all these three elements have been fully satisfied, the production of the particular model is discontinued. Once production of a new version has begun, the re-equipment of the frontier military districts begins once again, and the material withdrawn from them is used to bring units located in the rear areas up to the required scale. Once the Soviet frontier military districts have been re-equipped, the process of supplying their used equipment to Category C divisions follows. Then the whole process begins again--to the second echelon, then to the first, then from the second via the first to the third.

Such a system of supplying combat equipment has undeniable advantages.

Firstly, secrecy is greatly increased. Both friends and enemies assume that the equipment issued to the Group of Forces in Germany is the very latest available. Enemies therefore greatly underestimate the fighting potential and capabilities of the Soviet Army. Friends, too, are misled and it therefore becomes possible to sell them a piece of equipment which is being issued in East Germany as if it were the most up-to-date model.

Secondly, it becomes far more difficult for a Soviet soldier to defect to the enemy with details of the newest equipment--or even, perhaps, to drive across the border in the latest tank or fighting vehicle. It is practically impossible to do this from the Baltic or Byelorussian Military Districts. The Soviet command does not worry at all about the Trans-Baykal or Far Eastern Military Districts. It knows very well that every Soviet soldier hates socialism and that he would therefore defect only to one of the capitalist countries. No one would ever think of defecting to socialist China.

Thirdly, in the event of war, it is the first echelon forces which would suffer the greatest losses in the first few hours--good equipment must be lost, of course, but it should not be the very latest. But then, after this, the Carpathian, Byelorussian and

Baltic divisions go into battle equipped with the new weapons, whose existence is unsuspected by the enemy.

This system of re-equipment has been in existence for several decades. It is significant that the T-34 tank, which went into mass production as early as 1940, was issued only to military districts in the rear areas. Although the USSR was unprepared for Germany's surprise attack, these security measures were taken automatically, simple as they were to enforce. The surprise onslaught made by the Germans destroyed thousands of Soviet tanks, but there was not a single T-34 among them. Nor, despite the fact that the Soviet Army had some 2,000 of these tanks, did they appear in battle during the first weeks of the war. It was only after the first echelon of the Soviet forces had been completely destroyed, that the German forces first met the excellent T-34. It is also significant that German Intelligence did not suspect even the existence of that tank, let alone the fact that it was in mass production.

The Invisible Divisions

1

On 31 December, 1940, the German General Staff finished work on a directive on the strategic deployment of the Wehrmacht for the surprise attack on the USSR. A top-secret appendix to the directive was prepared from data provided by German Intelligence, containing an appreciation of the fighting strength of the Red Army. The German generals believed that the Soviet land forces possessed 182 divisions, of which only 141 could be brought into a War against Germany. Because of the tense situation on the Asian frontiers of the USSR, a minimum of 41 divisions must at all costs be left guarding these frontiers. The whole plan for the war against the USSR was therefore based on an estimate of the speed with which 141 Soviet divisions could be destroyed.

On 22 June Germany attacked, taking everyone in the USSR, Stalin included, by surprise. The way the war developed could not have been better for Germany. In the first few hours, thousands of aircraft were blazing on Soviet airfields while thousands of Soviet tanks and guns did not even succeed in leaving their depots. In the first days of the war, dozens of Soviet divisions, finding themselves encircled and without ammunition, fuel or provisions, surrendered ingloriously. German armoured spearheads carried out brilliant encirclement operations surrounding not just Soviet divisions or corps but entire Armies. On the third day of the war the 3rd and the 10th Soviet Armies were surrounded near Bialystok. Immediately after this an equally large encirclement operation was carried out near Minsk, Vitebsk and Orsha, near Smolensk. Two Soviet armies were destroyed after being surrounded near Uman' and five Armies in a huge pocket near Kiev.

However, already, even while the bells were ringing for their victories, the sober-minded German generals were biting their fingernails, as they bent over maps; the number of Soviet divisions was not diminishing--on the contrary, it was rising fast. Already in mid-August General Halder was writing in his diary: 'We underestimated them. We have now discovered and identified 360 of their divisions!' But Halder was only talking about the Soviet divisions which were directly involved at that moment in fighting in the forward areas--that is, first echelon divisions. But how many were there in the second echelon? And in the third? And in the reserves of the Armies and the Fronts? And in the internal military districts? And in the Stavka's reserve? And how many divisions had the NKVD? How many were there in all?

The miscalculation proved fatal. 153 German and 37 allied divisions proved insufficient to destroy the Red Army, even given the most favourable conditions.

The German generals' miscalculation was twofold. Firstly, the Red Army consisted, not of 182 but of 303 divisions, without counting the divisions of the NKVD, the airborne forces, the marine infantry, the frontier troops, the Fortified Area troops and others.

Secondly, and this was most important, the German generals knew absolutely nothing about the 'second formation' system--the system which splits Soviet divisions into two in the course of one night. This is a system which enables the Soviet General Staff to increase the number of its divisions by precisely one hundred per cent, within a remarkably short time.

2

The system of 'invisible' divisions was adopted by the Red Army at the beginning of the 1930s. It saved the Soviet Union from defeat in the Second World War. It is still in use today.

The process, which enables the Soviet leadership to expand the fighting strength of its Armed Forces with great speed, is simple and reliable and uses almost no material resources.

In peacetime every divisional commander has not one but two deputies. One of these carries out his duties continuously, the other does so only from time to time, since he has an additional series of responsibilities. He also has a secret designation--'Divisional Commander--Second Formation'.

The chief of staff of a division, a Colonel, also has two deputies, Lieutenant-Colonels, one of whom also has a secret designation--'Divisional Chief of Staff--Second Formation'.

The same system applies in every regiment.

Every battalion has a commander (a Lieutenant-Colonel) and a deputy, who is secretly designated 'Battalion Commander--Second Formation'.

Let us imagine that a conflict has broken out on the Soviet-Chinese frontier. A division receives its stand-to signal and moves off immediately to its operational zone. The divisional commander has only one deputy--the officer who has been carrying out this function, with all its responsibilities, in peacetime. His chief of staff and his regimental commanders, too, have only one deputy apiece. The battalion commanders have no deputies, but in a situation of this sort one of the company commanders in each battalion immediately becomes deputy to the battalion commander and one of the platoon commanders automatically takes his place.

Such unimportant moves of officers do not reduce the fighting efficiency of the division in any way.

So, the division leaves its camp at full strength, with all its soldiers and equipment. If it has less than its complement of soldiers and junior officers, it will be brought up to strength as it moves to the operational zone. The absorption of reservists is an operation which has been very carefully worked out.

However, after the departure of the division the military camp is not left empty. The Colonel who functioned as deputy to the division's chief in peacetime has remained there. There, too, are six Lieutenant-Colonels, who were the deputies of the regimental commanders, together with the deputy battalion commanders and with one third of the platoon commanders, who now become company commanders.

Thus, an entire command staff remains in the camp. Their previously secret titles become overt. Within twenty-four hours this new division receives 10,000 reserve soldiers and the military camp from which one division has only just set out is already

occupied by a new one. Unquestionably, of course, the new division is inferior in fighting power to the one which has just departed for the front. Of course, the reservists have long ago forgotten what they were taught during their army service many years earlier. It is understandable that the platoons, companies and battalions have not shaken down and are not yet capable of obeying the orders of their commanders promptly and accurately. Nevertheless, this is a division. At its head is a trained and experienced officer who for several years has been, essentially, an understudy to the commander of a real operational division and who has often performed the latter's functions. Those in command of the new regiments, battalions and, companies, too, are all operational officers, rather than reservists. Each of them has worked constantly with real soldiers and with up-to-date equipment, has taken part in battle exercises and has borne constant, heavy responsibility for his actions and for those of his subordinates. In addition, all the officers of the new division from the commander downwards know one another and have worked together for many years.

But where does enough equipment for so many new divisions come from? This question is simple. These 'invisible' divisions use old equipment. For instance, immediately after the end of the war, Soviet infantrymen were armed with PPSH automatic weapons. These were changed for AK-47 assault rifles. Each division received the number of new weapons which it needed and the old ones were mothballed and stored in the division's stores for the 'invisible divisions'. Then the AKM rifle replaced the AK-47s, which were taken to the divisional store, from which the old PPSH weapons were sent (still fit for use) to government storehouses or were passed on to 'national liberation movements'. The same path has been followed by the RPG-1, RPG-2, RPG-7 and then the RPG-16 anti-tank rocket launchers. As new weapons were received, those of the previous generation remain in the division's store, until the division receives something completely new. Then the contents of the store are renewed.

The same happens with tanks, artillery, communications equipment and so forth. I have myself seen, in many divisional stores, mothballed JS-3 tanks (which were first issued to units at the end of the Second World War) at a time when the whole division was equipped with the T-64, which was then brand new. When the Soviet artillery began to be re-equipped with self-propelled guns, the old, towed guns were certainly not sent away to be melted down. They were mothballed for the 'second formation division'.

So, you say, these 'invisible divisions' are not only staffed with reservists who have grown fat and idle, but are equipped with obsolete weapons? Quite correct. But why, Soviet generals ask, reasonably, should we issue fat reservists with the latest equipment? Would they be able to learn to use it? Would there be enough time to teach them in a war? Is it not better to keep the old (in other words simple and reliable) equipment, which is familiar to the reservists? Weapons which they learned to use eight or ten years ago, when they were in the army? Mothballing an old tank is a thousand times cheaper than building a new one. Is it not better to put ten thousand old tanks into storage than to build ten new ones?

Yes, the 'invisible divisions' are old-fashioned and they don't bristle with top-secret equipment, but it costs absolutely nothing to maintain 150 of them in peacetime. And the arrival of 150 divisions, even if they are old-fashioned, at a critical moment, to reinforce 150 others who are armed with the very latest equipment, could nonplus the enemy and spoil all his calculations. That is just what happened in 1941.

The system of 'second formation' is not restricted to the land forces. It is also used by the airborne forces, the frontier troops, the marine infantry, in the Air Forces and by the National Air Defence Forces.

Here is an example of the use of this system.

At the end of the 1950s the anti-aircraft artillery regiments and divisions of the National Air Defence Forces began to be rapidly re-equipped with rocket weapons, in place of conventional artillery. All the anti-aircraft guns were left with the anti-aircraft regiments and divisions as secondary weapon systems, in addition to the new rockets. It was intended that, in the event of war, an anti-aircraft artillery regiment could be set up as a counterpart to each anti-aircraft rocket regiment and that the same could be done with each anti-aircraft rocket brigade and division. Khrushchev himself came out strongly against the system. Those commanding the National Air Defence Forces suggested that Khrushchev should withdraw amicably but Khrushchev refused, rejecting what he saw as a whimsical idea by a handful of conservative generals who were unable to understand the superiority of anti-aircraft rockets over obsolete anti-aircraft guns. But then the war in Vietnam began. Suddenly, it was realised that rockets are useless against aircraft which are flying at extremely low altitudes. It also became clear, that there are conditions in which it is quite impossible to transport rockets into certain areas, that during mass attacks it is almost impossible for rocket launchers to reload so that after the first launch they are completely useless, that the electronic equipment of rocket forces is exposed to intense countermeasures by the enemy, and that those may seriously reduce the effectiveness of missile systems. It was then that the old-fashioned, simple, reliable, economical anti-aircraft guns were remembered. Thousands of them were taken out of mothballs and sent to Vietnam to strengthen the anti-aircraft rocket sub-units. The results they achieved are well known.

This makes it quite clear why old anti-aircraft guns (tens of thousands of them) are still stored, today, by the anti-aircraft rocket sub-units of the Soviet Army. All of them have already been collected together for the 'invisible' regiments, brigades and divisions. If it should become necessary, all that needs to be done is to call upon those reservists who have once served in units equipped with these systems and the numerical strength of the National Air Defence Forces will be doubled. Of course, its fighting strength will not be increased in proportion to this numerical growth, but in battle any increase in strength may change the relative positions of the combatants.

Why is a Military District commanded by a Colonel-General in peacetime, but only by a Major-General in wartime?

1

No single aspect of the organisation of the Soviet Army gives rise to so many disagreements and misunderstandings among specialists as the question of Military Districts. One expert will assert that a district is under the command of the Commander-in-Chief of Land Forces. Others will immediately reject this. The commander of a military district has an Air Army at his disposal and he is in command of it, but the C-in-C Land Forces is not entitled to exercise command over an Air Army. The commander of a military district may have naval, rocket or flying training schools in his area and he must command them, but the C-in-C Land Forces has no authority over such institutions. In order to understand the role of the military district in the Soviet Army, we must once again return to wartime and remember what its function was then.

Before the war, the territory of the Soviet Union was divided into 16 military districts. The same organisational structure still exists today, with minor changes.

Before the war military districts were commanded by Colonel-Generals and Generals of the Army. Today the situation remains exactly the same. During the war the forces from these districts went to the front, under the command of these same Colonel-Generals and Generals. But the military districts remained in existence. During the war they were commanded by Major-Generals or, in a few instances, by Lieutenant-Generals.

During the war the military districts were nothing but territorial military administrative units. Each military district was responsible for:

Maintaining order and discipline among the population, and ensuring the stability of the Communist regime.

Guarding military and industrial installations. Providing and guarding communications.

Mobilising human, material, economic and natural resources for use by the fighting armies.

Training reservists.

Mobilisation.

Of course these activities did not fall within the scope of the C-in-C Land Forces. For this reason, the military districts were subordinated to the Deputy Minister of Defence and through him to the most influential section of the Politburo. The military districts contain training schools for all Services and arms of service and it is in these that new formations for all the Armed Services are assembled. For example, ten armies, one of them an Air Army, were formed in the Volga Military District during the war, together with several brigades of marine infantry, one Polish division and a Czech battalion. In any future war, the military districts would perform the same function. While military units and formations were being assembled and trained they would all come under the orders of the commander of the military district. He would himself be responsible to the C-in-C Land Forces for all questions concerning the latter's armies, to the C-in-C of the Navy on all matters concerning marine infantry, for air questions to the C-in-C of the Air Forces and for questions relating to foreign units to the C-in-C of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. Because the overwhelming majority of the units in a district comes from the Land Forces, it has come to be believed that the C-in-C Land Forces is the direct superior of the commanders of the military districts. But this is a misapprehension. Each C-in-C controls only his own forces in any given military district. He has no authority to become involved in the wide range of questions for which the commander of a military district is responsible, in addition to the training of reservists. As soon as new formations have completed their training, they pass from the responsibility of the commander of the military district to the Stavka and are sent to the front. Thus, the commander of a military district is simply the military governor of a huge territory. As such, he is in command of every military formation located on his territory, whichever Armed Service it comes from.

2

At the end of the war staffs and fighting units would be dispersed throughout the country in accordance with the plans of the General Staff. It would be normal for a Front, consisting of a Tank, an Air and two All-Arms Armies to be located in a military district. By virtue of his position, the Front Commander, who has the rank of Colonel-General or General of the Army, is of considerably greater importance than the wartime commander of a military district. In peacetime, in order to avoid bureaucracy and duplication, the staffs of the Front and of the military district are merged. The Front Commander then becomes both the military and the territorial commander, with the peacetime title of Commander of the Forces of the District. The general, who acted

as a purely territorial commander during the war, becomes the Deputy Commander of the district in peacetime, with special responsibility for training. The Front's chief of staff becomes the peacetime chief of staff of the district and the officer who held the function in the district in wartime becomes his deputy.

Thus, in peacetime a military district is at one and the same time an operational Front and an enormous expanse of territory. However, it can split into two parts at any moment. The Front goes off to fight and the district's organisational framework stays behind to maintain order and to train reservists.

In some cases something which is either larger or smaller than a Front may be located in a particular military district. For instance, only a single Army is stationed in the Siberian Military District, while the Volga and Ural Military Districts, too, have only one Army, which in both cases is of reduced strength. In peacetime the staffs of these Armies are merged with the staffs of the districts in which they are located. The Commanders of these Armies act as district commanders while the generals who would command the district in wartime function as their deputies. Since these particular districts do not contain Fronts, they have no Air Armies. The C-in-C Land Forces therefore has the sole responsibility for inspecting these troops and this is what has led to the belief that these Districts are under his command.

No two districts are in the same situation. The Kiev Military District contains the staff of the Commander-in-Chief of the South-Western Strategic District and a Group of Tank Armies. The staffs of the Kiev Military District, of the Group of Tank Armies and of the C-in-C have been merged. In peacetime, too, the C-in-C goes under the modest title of Commander of the Kiev Military District. We have already seen how different the position is in other districts.

In the Byelorussian Military District the staffs of the District and of a Group of Tank Armies are merged. Although he has more forces than his colleague in Kiev, the Commander of the District is nevertheless two steps behind him, since he is not the C-in-C of a Strategic Direction but only the Commander of a Group of Tank Armies.

In the Trans-Baykal Military District the District staff, that of the C-in-C of the Far Eastern Strategic Direction and the staff of the Front are merged.

Depending on the forces stationed on its territory, a military district is assigned to one of three categories, category 1 being the highest. This classification is kept secret, as are the real titles of the generals who, in peacetime, each carry the modest title of Commander of a Military District.

The System for Evacuating the Politburo from the Kremlin

1

The Kremlin is one of the mightiest fortresses in Europe. The thickness of the walls in some places is as much as 6-5 metres and their height reaches 19 metres. Above the walls rise eighteen towers, each of which can defend itself independently and can cover the approaches to the walls.

In the fourteenth century the Kremlin twice withstood sieges by the Lithuanians and during the fifteenth century the Mongolian Tartars made two unsuccessful attempts within the space of fifty years to capture it.

After the Tartar yoke had been shaken off, the Kremlin was used as a national treasury, as a mint, as a prison and as a setting for solemn ceremonies. But the Russian Tsars lived in Kolomenskoye and in other residencies outside the town. Peter the Great left Moscow altogether and built himself a new capital, opening a window on

Europe. An unheard-of idea--to build a new capital on the distant borders of his huge country, right under the nose of the formidable enemy with whom Peter fought for almost his whole reign. And all in order to have contact with other countries.

After Peter the Great, not a single Tsar built behind the Kremlin's stone walls. Go to the capital he built, to Tsarkoye Syelo, to Peterhof, to the Winter Palace, and you will note that all of them have one feature in common--enormous windows. And the wider the windows of the imperial palaces became, the more widely the doors of the empire were thrown open. The Russian nobility spent at least half of their lives in Paris, some of them returning home only long enough to fight Napoleon before rushing back there as quickly as possible. After the 1860 reforms, a Russian peasant did not even have to seek permission before emigrating. If he wanted to live in America--well, if he didn't like being at home, to hell with him! Even today in the United States and in Canada millions of people still cling to their Slavonic background. Foreigners were allowed into the country without visas of any sort--and not just as tourists. They were taken into Government service and were entrusted with almost everything, given posts in the War Ministry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior.. The ministries, the crown and the throne were entrusted to Catherine the Great, who was honoured as the mother of the country, everybody having forgotten that she was a German. There is no need even to mention the freedom given to foreign business undertakings which set themselves up on Russian territory. It was, in short, an idyllic state of affairs, or perhaps not quite idyllic but certainly something entirely different to the state of affairs which exists today.

Under Lenin, everything changed. He began by closing all the frontiers. Before the First World War more than 300,000 people went to Germany alone, each year, for seasonal work. Vladimir Ilyich soon put a stop to that. And having closed the country's frontiers he soon became aware that it would be no bad thing to shut himself away from the people behind a stone wall. He suddenly thought of the Kremlin. Lenin realised quite clearly that he would be shot at more often than the Emperors of Russia had ever been and without a moment's hesitation he abandoned the wide windows of the imperial palaces for the blank walls of the Kremlin.

Having shut his people in behind a wall of iron and having put a stone one between them and himself, Lenin then took a precaution which had not been resorted to in Russia for a thousand years. He brought in foreign mercenaries to guard the Kremlin--the 4th Latvian rifles to be precise. Lenin did not trust Russians with this job--he must have had his reasons.

These mercenaries claimed, as one man, that they were guarding Lenin out of purely ideological motives, since they were convinced socialists. Despite this, however, not one of them would acknowledge the validity of Soviet bank notes; they demanded that Lenin should pay them in the Tsar's gold. Thanks to Lenin, there was enough of this available. At the same time, a brave preacher in Riga prophesied that the whole of free Latvia would one day pay with its blood for these handfuls of gold.

The Kremlin also had a great appeal for Stalin, who inherited it from Lenin. He strengthened and modernised all its buildings thoroughly. Among the first of the changes he was responsible for was a series of large-scale underground constructions--a secret corridor leading to the Metro, an underground exit on to Red Square and an underground command post and communications centre. Stalin threw Lenin's foreign mercenaries out of the Kremlin. Many of them were executed straight away, others many years later--before the seizure of Latvia itself.

Stalin chose to spend a large proportion of his thirty years in power immured in the Kremlin. He also arranged for a number of underground fortresses to be built in the grounds of his various dachas in the country round Moscow. The most substantial of these was at Kuntsevo. His complex pattern of movement between the Kremlin and

these dacha fortresses enabled Stalin to confuse even those closest to him about where he was at any particular moment.

Stalin's system of governing the country and of controlling its armed services is still in operation today. In peacetime all the threads still lead back to the Kremlin and to the underground fortresses around Moscow. In wartime, control is exercised from the control post of the High Command, which, incidentally, was also built by Stalin.

2

It is quite impossible to acquire a plot of land in the centre of Moscow--even in a cemetery. This is not surprising if you visualise a city which contains seventy Ministries. For Moscow is not only the capital of the Soviet Union but also of the RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic), which means that it must house not only Soviet ministries but dozens of republican ones as well. Besides these Moscow houses the KGB, the General Staff, the Headquarters of the Moscow Military District, the Headquarters of the Moscow District Air Defence Forces, the Headquarters of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, CMEA, more than one hundred embassies, twelve military academies, the Academy of Sciences, hundreds of committees (including the Central Committee), and of directorates (including the Chief Intelligence Directorate--GRU), editorial offices, libraries, communications centres, etc.

Each of these wishes to put up its buildings as close as possible to the centre of the city and to build accommodation for its thousands of bureaucrats as close to its main buildings as it can.

A fierce battle goes on for every square metre of ground in the centre of Moscow and only the Politburo can decide who should be given permission to build and who should be refused.

And yet, almost in the centre, a huge, apparently endless field lies fallow. This is Khodinka, or, as it is known today, the Central Airfield. If this field were built on there would be room for all the bureaucrats. Their glass skyscrapers would rise right along the Leningradskiy Prospekt, which runs into Gorky Street and leads straight to the Kremlin. Many people look enviously at Khodinka musing about ways of cutting small slices out of it--after all this 'Central Airfield' is not used by aircraft: it simply lies there, empty and idle.

For several years the KGB made efforts to acquire a small piece of land at Khodinka. The Lubyanka could not be enlarged any further, but the KGB was still growing. A vast new building was needed. But all attempts by the KGB to persuade the Politburo to allocate it some land at Khodinka were unsuccessful. That was how the huge new KGB building came to be built right out beyond the ring-road--a highly inconvenient location. Meanwhile the endless field still stretches through the centre of Moscow, lying empty as it always has done. Once a year rehearsals for the Red Square military parade are held there and then the field sinks back into lethargy. Naturally this valuable piece of ground is not being kept just for these rehearsals. The troops could be trained on any other field--there are enough of them around Moscow.

Why does the Politburo refuse even the KGB, its favourite offspring, permission to cut the smallest corner off this vast unused field? Because the field is connected to the Kremlin by a direct underground Metro line--Sverdlov Square (under the Kremlin itself)--Mayakovskaya--Byelorusskaya--Dinamo--Aeroport. Muscovites know how often and how quickly this line is closed during any kind of holiday or celebration, or any other event which breaks the normal rhythm of life in the Soviet capital.

army_engl.gif>

Why do the Soviet leaders particularly like this Metro line? Already before the war many spacious underground halls had been built for Moscow Metro stations and the ceremonies to mark the anniversary of the revolution, on 6 November, 1941, were actually held in the Mayakovskiy Metro station. Everyone invited to attend had to reach the station from above, because the line had been closed. Once they were there a special Metro train appeared carrying Stalin, Molotov and Beriya. They came from the Sverdlov Square Metro station. To reach this, they do not, of course, leave the Kremlin. They have their own secret corridor leading to the Metro from right inside its buildings.

Stalin's route out of the Kremlin has existed unchanged for several decades. If necessary, any or all of the members of the Politburo can be taken underground, in complete secrecy and security, to Khodinka, where government aircraft await them in well-guarded hangars. With normal organisation, the Politburo can leave the huge, traffic-laden city within fifteen minutes, during which no outsider will spot official cars speeding along streets in the centre or helicopters flying out of the Kremlin.

North-west of Moscow is another government airfield--Podlipki. (Incidentally, just beside this airfield is the centre at which cosmonauts are trained.) The sub-unit stationed at Podlipki is known as the 1st Task Force of the Civil Air Fleet. In fact it has virtually nothing to do with the Civil Air Fleet--it is a group of government aircraft. Ordinary official flights begin and end at Podlipki. Special official flights, involving ceremonial meetings and escorts, make the brief flight to Sheremetyevo or to one of Moscow's other large airports. In an emergency the Politburo could be evacuated in various ways:

- from the Kremlin in official cars to Podlipki and from there by air to the Supreme Command Post; this is a long and inconvenient route. In addition all Moscow can see what is happening.

- from the Kremlin by Metro to Khodinka and from there by helicopter to Podlipki; this too, is a fairly long route, involving as it does changing from the helicopter to a fixed-wing aircraft.

- the shortest variation--an aircraft of the 1st Task Force of the Civil Air Fleet is either permanently stationed at Khodinka or makes the short flight there from Podlipki, takes the members of the Politburo on board, and vanishes.

3

The special aircraft soars up into the early morning mist over sleeping Moscow. As it gains height it makes a wide turn and sets course for the SCP--the Supreme Command Post, built by Stalin and modernised by his successors. Where is the SCP? How can it be found? Where would Stalin have chosen to site it?

Most probably it is not in Siberia. Today the eastern regions are threatened by China, as they were before the war by Japan. Of course the SCP would not be located in any area which might be threatened, even theoretically, by an aggressor, so it cannot be in the Ukraine, in the Baltic region, in the Caucasus or in the Crimea. Common sense suggests that it must be somewhere as far away as possible from any frontier--in other words in the central part of the RSFSR, which could hardly be overrun by enemy tanks and which could scarcely be reached by enemy bombers, or by aircraft carrying airborne troops. And if hostile aircraft were to reach the spot they could only do so without fighter cover, so they would be defenceless.

Secondly, the SCP cannot, of course, be sited in an open field. There must be a minimum of 200 metres of solid granite above its many kilometres of tunnels and roads. This being so, it can only be in either the Urals or Zhiguli.

Thirdly it stands to reason that it must be surrounded by natural barriers which are so impenetrable that no hunter who happens to enter the area, no geologist who loses his way, no gaol-breaker, no pilot who has survived a crash and wandered for weeks through the taiga can come across the SCP's huge ventilator shafts, descending into terrifying chasms or its gigantic tunnels, their entrances sealed by armoured shields weighing thousands of tons. If Stalin set out to keep the location of the SCP secret he would not have chosen the Urals, whose gentle slopes were being completely worn away by the feet of tens of millions of prisoners. Where could one build a whole town, so that no trace of it would be found by a single living soul? The only possible place is Zhiguli.

Would it be possible to find a better place, anywhere on earth, to build an underground town? Zhiguli is a real natural miracle--a granite monolith 80 kilometres long and 40 wide.

Some geologists maintain that Zhiguli is one single rock, crumbling slightly at the edges but retaining the original, massive unity of all its millions of tons.

It rises out of the boundless steppes, almost entirely encircled by the huge river Volga, which turns it into a peninsula, with rocky shores which stretch for 150 kilometres and fall sheer to the water's edge. Zhiguli is a gigantic fortress built by nature, with granite walls hundreds of metres high, bounded by the waters of the great river. From the air, Zhiguli presents an almost flat surface, overgrown with age-old, impenetrable forest.

The climate is excellent--a cold winter, with hard frosts, but no wind. The summer is dry and hot. This would be the place to build sanatoriums! Here and there in clearings in the virgin forests there are beautiful private houses, fences, barbed wire, Alsatian dogs. One of Stalin's dachas was built here, but nothing was ever written about it, any more than about those at Kuntsevo or Yalta. In the vicinity were the villas of Molotov and Beriya and later of Khrushchev, Brezhnev and others.

Anyone who has travelled on the Moscow Metro will say that there is no better underground system in the world. But I would disagree with this--there is a much better one. In Zhiguli. It was built by the best of the engineers who worked on the Moscow Metro--and by thousands of prisoners.

In Zhiguli tens of kilometres of tunnels have been cut, hundreds of metres deep into the granite monolith and command posts, communications centres, stores and shelters have been built for those who will control the gigantic armies during a war.

In peacetime, no aircraft may fly over this region. Not even the most friendly of foreigners may enter the Zhiguli area, which is protected by a corps of the National Air Defence Forces and by a division of the KGB. Nearby is a huge airfield, at Kurumoch, which is completely empty. This is where the special aircraft will land but it is also intended for use by additional fighter aircraft, to strengthen the defences in the event of war.

Close to Zhiguli is the city of Kuybishev. It, too, is closed to foreigners, and it is useful to remember that this was where the whole Soviet government was based during the last war.

Part Five

Strategy and tactics

The Axe Theory

For decades, Western military theorists have unanimously asserted that any nuclear war would begin with a first stage during which only conventional weapons would be used. Then, after a certain period, each side would begin, uncertainly and irresolutely at first, to use nuclear weapons of the lowest calibre. Gradually, larger and larger nuclear weapons would be brought into action. These theorists hold varying views on the period which this escalation would take, ranging from a few weeks to several months.

Being unopposed, this theory was to be found in the pages of both serious studies and light novels--the latter being fantasies with happy endings, in which a nuclear war was brought to a halt in such a way that it could never recur.

The theory that a nuclear war would take a long time to build up originated in the West at the beginning of the nuclear age. It is incomprehensible and absurd, and it completely mystifies Soviet marshals. For a long time there was a secret debate at the highest levels of the Soviet government--have the Western politicians and generals gone off their heads or are they bluffing? It was concluded that, of course, no one really believed in the theory but that it had been thought up in order to hide what Western policy-makers really believed about the subject. But then the question arose: for whose benefit could such an unconvincing and, to put it mildly, such a silly idea have been dreamed up? Presumably not for that of the Soviet leadership. The theory is too naive for specialists to believe. That must mean that it was devised for the ignorant and for the popular masses in the West, to reassure the man in the street.

2

The first American film I ever saw was *The Magnificent Seven* with Yul Brynner in the main role. At that time all I knew about the Americans was what Communist propaganda said about them and I had not believed that since my earliest childhood. Thus it was from a cowboy film that I began to try to form my own independent opinions about the American people and about the principles by which they live.

American films are not often shown in the Soviet Union, but after *The Magnificent Seven* I did not miss a single one. The country as I saw it on the screen pleased me and the people even more so--good-looking, strong, masculine and decisive. It seemed that the Americans spent all their time in the saddle, riding on marvellous horses in blazing sunlight through deserts, shooting down villains without mercy. My heart belonged only to America. I worshipped the Americans--in particular for the decisiveness with which they kept down the number of crooks in their society. The heroes of American films would submit for long periods and with great patience to humiliation and insults and were cheated at every turn, but matters were always settled with a dramatically decisive gunfight. The two enemies gaze unflinchingly into each other's eyes. Each has his hands tensely over his holsters. No exchange of curses, no insults, not a superfluous movement. Dramatic silence. Both are calm and collected. Clearly death has spread its black wings above them. The gunfight itself almost represents death, for each of them. They look long and hard into each other's eyes. Suddenly and simultaneously both of them realise, not from what they see or hear, not with their minds or their hearts but from pure animal instinct, that the moment has come. Two shots ring out as one. It is impossible to detect the moment at which they draw their guns and pull the triggers. The denouement is instantaneous, without preamble. A corpse rolls on the ground. Occasionally there are two corpses. Usually the villain is killed but the hero is only wounded. In the hand.

Many years passed and I became an officer serving with the General Staff. Suddenly, as I studied American theories of war, I came to an appalling realisation. It

became clear to me that a modern American cowboy who is working up to a decisive fight will always expect to begin by spitting at and insulting his opponent and to continue by throwing whisky in his face and chucking custard pies at him before resorting to more serious weapons. He expects to hurl chairs and bottles at his enemy and to try to stick a fork or a tableknife into his behind and then to fight with his fists and only after all this to fight it out with his gun.

This is a very dangerous philosophy. You are going to end up by using pistols. Why not start with them? Why should the bandit you are fighting wait for you to remember your gun? He may shoot you before you do, just as you are going to slap his face. By using his most deadly weapon at the beginning of the fight, your enemy saves his strength. Why should he waste it throwing chairs at you? Moreover, this will enable him to save his own despicable life. After all, he does not know, either, when you, the noble hero, will decide to use your gun. Why should he wait for this moment? You might make a sudden decision to shoot him immediately after throwing custard pies at him, without waiting for the exchange of chairs. Of course he won't wait for you when it comes to staying alive. He will shoot first. At the very start of the fight.

I consoled myself for a long time with the hope that the theory of escalation in a nuclear war had been dreamed up by the American specialists to reassure nervous old-age pensioners. Clearly, the theory is too fatally dangerous to serve as a basis for secret military planning. Yet, suddenly, the American specialists demonstrated to the whole world that they really believed that this theory would apply to a world-wide nuclear war. They really did believe that the bandit they would be fighting would give them time to throw custard pies and chairs at him before he made use of his most deadly weapon.

The demonstration was as public as it possibly could be. At the end of the 1960s the Americans began to deploy their anti-missile defence system. They could not, of course, use it to defend more than one vitally important objective. The objective they chose to protect was their strategic rockets. They did not decide to safeguard the heart and mind of their country--the President, their government or their capital. Instead they would protect their pistol--in other words they were showing the whole world that, in the event of a fight, they did not intend to use it. This revelation was greeted with the greatest delight in the Kremlin and by the General Staff.

3

The philosophy of the Soviet General Staff is no different from that of the horsemen whom I had watched riding the desert. 'If you want to stay alive, kill your enemy. The quicker you finish him off, the less chance he will have to use his own gun.' In essence, this is the whole theoretical basis on which their plans for a third world war have been drawn up. The theory is known unofficially in the General Staff as the 'axe theory'. It is stupid, say the Soviet generals, to start a fist-fight if your opponent may use a knife. It is just as stupid to attack him with a knife if he may use an axe. The more terrible the weapon which your opponent may use, the more decisively you must attack him, and the more quickly you must finish him off. Any delay or hesitation in doing this will just give him a fresh opportunity to use his axe on you. To put it briefly, you can only prevent your enemy from using his axe if you use your own first.

The 'axe theory' was put forward in all Soviet manuals and handbooks to be read at regimental level and higher. In each of these one of the main sections was headed 'Evading the blow'. These handbooks advocated, most insistently, the delivery of a massive pre-emptive attack on the enemy, as the best method of self-protection. This recommendation was not confined to secret manuals--non-confidential military publications carried it as well.

But this was trivial by comparison to the demonstration which the Soviet Union gave the whole world at the beginning of the 1970s, with the official publication of data about the Soviet anti-missile defence system. This whole system was, in reality, totally inadequate, but the idea behind it provides an excellent illustration of the Soviet philosophy on nuclear war. By contrast to the United States, the Soviet Union had no thought of protecting its strategic rockets with an anti-missile system. The best protection for rockets in a war is to use them immediately. Could any one devise a more effective way of defending them?

4

In addition to such elementary military logic, there are political and economic reasons which would quite simply compel the Soviet command to make use of the overwhelming proportion of its nuclear armoury within the first few minutes of a war.

From the political point of view, the turning point must be reached within the first few minutes. What alternative could there be? In peacetime Soviet soldiers desert to the West by the hundred, their sailors jump off ships in Western ports, their pilots try to break through the West's anti-aircraft defences in their aircraft. Even in peacetime, the problems involved in keeping the population in chains are almost insoluble. The problems are already as acute as this when no more than a few thousand of the most trusted Soviet citizens have even a theoretical chance of escaping. In wartime tens of millions of soldiers would have an opportunity to desert--and they would take it! In order to prevent this, every soldier must realise quite clearly that, from the very first moments of a war, there is no sanctuary for him at the other side of the nuclear desert. Otherwise the whole Communist house of cards will collapse.

From an economic point of view, too, the war must be as short as possible. Socialism is unable to feed itself from its own resources. The Soviet variety is no exception to this general rule. Before the revolution, Russia, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia all exported foodstuffs. Nowadays they have not enough reserves to hold out from one harvest to the next. Yet shortage of food leads very quickly to manifestations of discontent, to food-riots and to revolution. Remember what happened in Novocherkassk in 1962, throughout the Soviet Union in 1964 and in Poland in 1970 and 1980. If socialism is unable to feed itself in peacetime, when the whole army is used to bring in the harvest, what will happen when the whole army is thrown into battle and when all the men and vehicles at present used for agriculture are mobilised for war?

For these reasons, the Communists are forced to plan any adventures they have in mind for the second part of the year, for the period when the harvest has already been brought in, and to try to finish them as quickly as possible. Before the next season for work in the fields comes round.

The Strategic Offensive

1

Soviet generals believe, quite correctly, that the best kind of defensive operation is an offensive. Accordingly, no practical or theoretical work on purely defensive operations is carried out at Army level or higher. In order that they should take the offensive, Soviet generals are taught how to attack. In order that they should defend themselves successfully, they are also taught how to attack. Therefore, when we talk

of a large-scale operation--one conducted by a Front or a Strategic Direction--we can talk only of an offensive.

The philosophy behind the offensive is simple. It is easy to tear up a pack of cards if you take them one by one. If you put a dozen cards together it is very difficult to tear them up. If you try to tear up the whole pack at once you will be unsuccessful: you will not be able to tear them all up, and, furthermore, not a single card in the pack will be torn. Similarly, Soviet generals attack only with enormous masses of troops, using their cards only as a whole pack. In this way, the pack protects the cards which make it up.

Observing this principle of concentration of resources, in any future war the Soviet Army will only carry out operations by single Fronts in certain isolated sectors. In most cases it will carry out strategic operations--that is to say operations by groups of Fronts working together in the same sector.

2

The scenario for a strategic offensive operation is a standard one, in all cases. Let us take the Western Strategic Direction as an example. We already know that this has a minimum of three Fronts in its first echelon, one more in its second echelon, and a Group of Tank Armies in its third. The Baltic Fleet operates on its flank. Each of its Fronts has one Tank Army, one Air Army and two All-Arms Armies. In addition, the Commander-in-Chief has at his disposal a Corps from the Strategic Rocket Forces, a Corps from the Long-Range Air Force, three airborne divisions and the entire forces of Military Transport Aviation. The rear areas of the Strategic Direction are protected by three Armies from the National Air Defence Forces. A strategic offensive is divided into five stages:

The first stage, or initial nuclear strike, lasts for half an hour. Taking part in this strike are all the rocket formations which can be used at that stage, including the Corps from the Strategic Rocket Forces, the rocket brigades of the Fronts and Armies, the rocket battalions of the first division echelon and all the nuclear artillery which has reached the forward edge of the battle area. The initial nuclear strike has as its targets:

Command posts and command centres, administrative and political centres, lines of communication and communications centres--in other words, the brain and nerve-centres of a state and of its armies.

Rocket bases, stores for nuclear weapons, bases for nuclear submarines and for bomber aircraft. These targets must be knocked out in order to reduce Soviet losses at the hands of the enemy to the absolute minimum.

Airfields, anti-aircraft positions, radar stations, to ensure the success of the offensive breaks in the enemy's defenses, must be made for Soviet aircraft. The main groupings of the enemy's forces. Why fight them if they can be destroyed before a battle can begin?

In addition to the forces directly under the command of the C-in-C of the Strategic Direction, units of the Strategic Rocket Forces will also play a supporting role in the initial nuclear strike. These will concern themselves in particular with attacks on the enemy's principal ports, in order to prevent the enemy from bringing up reinforcements and in order to isolate the European continent.

Soviet generals consider, with good reason, that an initial nuclear strike must be unexpected, of short duration and of the greatest possible intensity. If it is delayed by as much as an hour, the situation of the Soviet Union will deteriorate sharply. Many of

the enemy's fighting units may move from their permanent locations, his aircraft may be dispersed on to motorways; divisions of his land forces may leave their barracks, his senior leaders may move, with their cabinets, to underground shelters or to airborne command posts and the task of annihilating them will become extremely difficult, if not impossible. This is why the maximum possible number of nuclear weapons will be used to deliver an initial nuclear strike.

The second stage follows immediately upon the first. It lasts between 90 and 120 minutes. It consists of a mass air attack by the Air Armies of all the Fronts and by all the Long-Range Air Force units at the disposal of the C-in-C of the Strategic Direction.

This attack is carried out as a series of waves. The first wave consists of all the available reconnaissance aircraft--not only those of the reconnaissance regiments but also the squadrons of fighters and fighter bombers which have been trained in reconnaissance. In all, more than a thousand reconnaissance aircraft from the Strategic Direction will join this wave; they will be assisted by several hundred pilotless reconnaissance aircraft. The primary tasks of the aircraft in this wave are to assess the effectiveness of the initial nuclear strike and to identify any objectives which have not been destroyed.

Immediately behind these aircraft comes the main wave, made up of all the Air Armies and Corps. Nuclear weapons are carried by those aircraft whose crews have been trained to deliver a nuclear strike. The targets of this wave are in the same categories as those of the rockets which delivered the initial nuclear attack. But, unlike the rockets, these aircraft attack mobile rather than stationary targets. They follow up after the rockets, finishing off whatever the latter were unable to destroy. Among the first of their mobile targets are: tank columns which have managed to leave their barracks, groups of aircraft which have succeeded in taking off from their permanent airfields and in reaching dispersal points on motorways, and mobile anti-aircraft weapons.

The Soviet commanders believe that this massive air activity can be carried out without heavy losses, since the enemy's radars will have been destroyed, many of his computer systems and lines of communication will have been disrupted and his aircrews and anti-aircraft forces will have been demoralised.

While these massive air operations are taking place all staff personnel will be working at top speed on evaluation of the information which is coming in about the results of the initial nuclear strike. Meanwhile, all the rocket launchers which took part in the initial nuclear strike will be reloading. At the same time, too, the rocket battalions of the divisions and the rocket brigades of the Armies and Fronts, which did not take part in the initial strike because they were too far behind the front line, will move up to the forward edge of the battle area at the maximum possible speed.

All aircraft will then return to their bases and the third stage will begin immediately.

The third stage, like the first, will last only half an hour. Taking part in it will be even more rocket launchers than those involved in the first stage, since many will have moved up from the rear areas. The thinking behind this plan is simple: in battle the enemy's prime concern will be to hunt out and destroy all Soviet rocket launchers; each of these should therefore inflict the maximum possible damage on the enemy before this happens. The aim is to destroy all those targets which survived the first and second stages, and to put the maximum possible number of the enemy's troops and equipment, especially his nuclear weapons, out of action.

The fourth stage lasts between 10 and 20 days. It can be broken down into offensive operations by individual Fronts. Each Front concentrates all its efforts on

ensuring success for its Tank Army. To achieve this the All-Arms Army attacks the enemy's defences and the Front Commander directs the Tank Army to the point at which a breakthrough has been achieved. At the same time, the entire resources of the Front's artillery division are used to clear a path for the Tank Army. The rocket brigades lay down a nuclear carpet ahead of the Tank Army, and the Air Army covers its breakthrough operation. The Front's anti-tank brigades cover the Tank Army's flanks, the air-borne assault brigade seizes bridges and crossing points for its use, and the diversionary brigade, operating ahead of and on the flanks of the Tank Army, does everything possible to provide it with favourable operating conditions.

The Tank Army is brought up to a breach in the enemy defences only when a real breakthrough has been achieved and once the Front's forces have room for manoeuvre. The Tank Army pushes forward at maximum possible speed to the greatest depth it can reach. It avoids prolonged engagements, it keeps clear of pockets of resistance and it often becomes separated by considerable distances from the other components of the Front. Its task, its aim, is to deliver a blow like that from a sword or an axe: the deeper it cuts, the better.

An All-Arms Army advances more slowly than a Tank Army, destroying all the pockets of resistance in its path and any groups of enemy troops which have been surrounded, clearing up the area as it moves forward.

A Tank Army is like a rushing flood, tearing its way through a gap in a dyke, smashing and destroying everything in its path. By contrast an All-Arms Army is a quiet, stagnant sheet of water, flooding a whole area, drowning enemy islands and slowly undermining buildings and other structures until they collapse.

During the first few hours or days of a war, one or all of the Fronts may suffer enormous losses. But it should not be assumed that the C-in-C of a Strategic Direction will use his second echelon Front to strengthen or take the place of the Front which has suffered most. The second echelon Front is brought into action at the point where the greatest success has been achieved, where the dyke has really been breached or where at least a very dangerous crack can be seen developing.

The fifth stage lasts 7-8 days. It may begin at any time during the fourth stage. As soon as the C-in-C is sure that one of his Fronts has really broken through, he moves up his second echelon Front and, if this manages to push through the opening, he brings his striking force, his Group of Tank Armies, into action. This operation by the Group against the enemy's rear defences represents the fifth stage of a strategic offensive.

This Group of Tank Armies consists of two Tank Armies. However, by this time the Tank Armies of the Fronts may already be in action against the enemy's rear defences. These Tank Armies may be taken away from the Front Commanders, at the decision of the C-in-C, and incorporated in the Group of Tank Armies. Towards the end of the action there may be five or even six Tank Armies in the Group, bringing its establishment up to as much as 10,000 tanks. If during a breakthrough half or even two thirds of these are lost, the Group still will be of impressive strength.

However, the Soviet General Staff hopes that losses will not be as large as this. Our pack of cards effect should manifest itself. Moreover, the operations of the Group of Tank Armies will be supported by all the resources available to the C-in-C of the Strategic Direction. All his rocket and air forces will be attacking the enemy with nuclear weapons, his airborne divisions will be dropped to help the Group to advance. Lastly, the whole Baltic Fleet will be supporting the Group. If the Group manages to advance, the whole of the forces available to the State, up to and including the Supreme Commander himself, can be massed to support it.

The strategic offensive has one alternative form. This is sometimes known as a 'Friday evening' offensive. It differs from the normal version only in dispensing with the first three stages described above. The operation therefore begins at the fourth stage--with a surprise attack by a group of Fronts against one or more countries.

In practice, what happened in Czechoslovakia was an operation by a group of Fronts, carried out swiftly and without warning. Significantly this operation caught the Czechs off guard--profiting by the Friday evening relaxation of the State apparatus after a working week. Because of the small size of Czechoslovakia and the evident disinclination of the Czech army to defend its country, the C-in-C did not bring his Group of Tank Armies forward from Byelorussia and the Front commanders did not push their Tank Armies into Czechoslovakia. Only a very small number of tanks took part in the operation--some 9,000 in all, drawn from the tank battalions of the regiments involved, the tank regiments of the divisions and the tank divisions of the Armies.

The success of the Czech operation produced a new optimism in various other countries in Europe, which realised that they could hope to be similarly liberated in the course of a few hours.

The terrible epidemic of pacification which subsequently swept through Western Europe aroused new hopes of success through a bloodless revolution in the hearts of the Soviet General Staff.

'Operation Détente'

1

In the winter of 1940, the Red Army broke through the 'Mannerheim Line'. No one knows what price it paid for this victory, but, time and again, demographers have come up with the same figure--a total of 1,500,000 human lives. Whether this is accurate or not, the losses were so staggering, even by Soviet standards, that the advance was halted the very moment Finnish resistance was broken.

The following summer Soviet tanks were rumbling through the streets of three sovereign states--Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. Since then, Soviet tanks have visited Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Bucharest, Budapest, Sofia, Belgrade, Pyongyang and even Peking. But they never dared to enter Helsinki.

Finland is the only country which has fought a war against Soviet aggression without ever having allowed Soviet tanks to enter its capital.

It is therefore surprising that it is Finland which has become the symbol of submission to Communist expansion. Halted by the valour with which this brave country defended itself, the communists changed their tactics. If they could not bring the Finns to their knees by fighting, they decided they would do it by peaceful methods. Their new weapon turned out to be more powerful than tanks. Soviet tanks entered Yugoslavia and Romania but both countries are independent today. They never reached Helsinki, but Finland has submitted.

This result surprised even the Soviet Communists themselves and it took them a long time to appreciate the power of the weapon which had fallen so unexpectedly into their hands. When they finally realised its effectiveness, they put it to immediate use against the remaining countries of Western Europe. Its effects are to be seen everywhere around us. The Communists knew that they could never seize Western

Europe so long as it was capable of defending itself, and this is why they concentrated their attacks on Western European determination to stand up to them.

Pacifism is sweeping through the West. It is doing the same in the Soviet Union. In the West, though, it is uncontrolled while in the USSR it is encouraged from above. However, both movements have a common aim. Western pacifists are fighting to stop the installation of new rockets in *Western* Europe. Soviet pacifists speak out for the same cause--against the installation of rockets in *Western* Europe.

Tactics

1

When I lecture to Western officers on tactics in the Soviet Army, I often close my talk by putting a question to them--always the same one--in order to be sure that they have understood me correctly. The question is trivial and elementary. Three Soviet motor-rifle companies are on the move in the same sector. The first has come under murderous fire and its attack has crumbled, the second is advancing slowly, with heavy losses, the third has suffered an enemy counter-attack and, having lost all its command personnel, is retreating. The commander of the regiment to which these companies belong has three tank companies and three artillery batteries in reserve. Try and guess, I say, how this regimental commander uses his reserves to support his three companies. 'You are to guess,' I say, 'what steps a Soviet regimental commander would take, not a Western one but a Soviet, a Soviet, a Soviet one.'

I have never yet received the correct reply.

Yet in this situation there is only one possible answer. From the platoon level to that of the Supreme Commander all would agree that there is only one possible decision: all three tank companies and all three artillery batteries must be used to strengthen the company which is moving ahead, however slowly. The others, which are suffering losses, certainly do not qualify for help. If the regimental commander, in a state of drunkenness or from sheer stupidity, were to make any other decision he would, of course, be immediately relieved of his command, reduced to the ranks and sent to pay for his mistake with his own blood, in a penal battalion.

My audiences ask, with surprise, how it can be that two company commanders, whose men are suffering heavy casualties, can ask for help without receiving any? 'That's the way it is,' I reply, calmly. 'How can there be any doubt about it?'

'What happens,' ask the Western officers, 'if a Soviet platoon or company commander asks for artillery support. Does he get it?'

'He has no right to ask for it,' I say.

'And if a company commander asks for air support--does he get it?'

'He has no right to ask for support of any sort, let alone air support.' My audience smiles--they believe they have found the Achilles heel of Soviet tactics. But I am always irritated--for this is not weakness, but strength.

How is it possible not to be irritated? A situation in which every platoon commander can ask for artillery support is one in which the divisional commander is unable to concentrate the full strength of his artillery in the decisive sector--a platoon commander cannot know which this is. A situation in which every company commander can call for air support is one in which the Commander of a Group of Armies is unable to bring together all his aircraft as a single striking force. To a military man this represents something quite unthinkable--the dispersal of resources.

The tactics used by Jenghiz Khan were primitive, in the extreme. His Mongolian horsemen would never engage in a single combat in any of the countries which his hordes overran. The training for battle which they received consisted solely of instruction in maintaining formation and in the observance of a disciplinary code which was enforced in the most barbarous way.

During a battle Jenghiz Khan would keep a close watch on the situation from a nearby hill. As soon as the slightest sign of success was visible at any point, he would concentrate all his forces there, sometimes even throwing in his own personal guard. Having broken through the enemy's line at a single point he would push irresistibly ahead and the enemy army, split in two, would disintegrate. It is worth recording that he never lost a battle in his life. Centuries passed and new weapons appeared. It seemed that this ancient principle of war was dead and buried. That at least was how it seemed to the French armies at Toulon. But then the young Bonaparte appeared, mustered all the artillery at the decisive spot and won his first brilliant victory with lightning speed. Subsequently he always concentrated his artillery and his cavalry in large numbers. In consequence, his junior commanders were deprived of both artillery and cavalry. Despite this, for decades his armies won every battle. At Waterloo he paid the penalty for abandoning the principle of concentrating his forces in the most important sector. His defeat there was the price he paid for dispersing his resources.

More time passed, tanks, aircraft and machine-guns made their appearance. The principles of Jenghiz Khan and Bonaparte were completely forgotten in France. In 1940 the Allies had more tanks than the Germans. They were evenly distributed among infantry sub-units, whose commanders were proud to have tanks directly under their command. Their German opposite numbers had no such grounds for pride, and this was the reason why Germany's victory was so rapid and so decisive. The German tanks were not dispersed but were concentrated in what, by the standards of 1940, were huge groups. The Allied tanks were scattered, like widely-spread fingers, which could not be clenched to make a fist. The German tanks struck, as a fist, unexpectedly and at the weakest point. The Germans' success has gone down in history as a victory which was won by their tanks.

Soviet tactics are of the utmost simplicity; they can be condensed into a single phrase--the maximum concentration of forces in the decisive sector. Anyone who was found responsible for dispersing forces of divisional strength or above during the war was shot without further ado. At lower levels the usual penalty for wasting resources in this way was reduction to the ranks and a posting to a penal battalion, which would also lead to death, though not always immediately, it is true.

Every Soviet operation, from Stalingrad onwards, developed in the way water breaks through a concrete dam: a single drop seeps through a microscopic crack, and is followed immediately by a dozen more drops, after which first hundreds and then thousands of litres pour through at ever increasing speed, becoming a cataract of hundreds of thousands of tonnes of raging water.

Here is one entirely typical example of such a breakthrough, carried out by the 16th Guards Rifle Corps of the 2nd Guards Army at Kursk in 1943. During an offensive by nine forward battalions only one managed to make any ground. Immediately, the commander of the regiment to which this battalion belonged concentrated all his resources at that point, on a front one kilometre wide. His divisional commander thereupon threw all his forces into this sector. The breach slowly became deeper and

wider and within half an hour the corps commander's reserves began to arrive. Within three hours, 27 of the 36 battalions belonging to the corps had been brought in to fight in the narrow sector, which was by now 7 kilometres wide. 1,087 of the 1,176 guns belonging to the corps, and all its tanks, were assembled in the breakthrough sector. Naturally, the battalion commanders who had been unable to penetrate the enemy's defences not only received no reinforcements, but had everything under their command taken away from them. And this was entirely as it should have been!

As the breach was widened, more and more forces were concentrated there. As soon as he was informed of the breakthrough the Commander of the Central Front, General Rokossovskiy, rushed an entire Army to the spot, with an Air Army to cover the operations. A few days later the Supreme Commander added his own reserve army, the 4th Tank Army, to the forces breaking through. Such a massive concentration of forces could not, of course, be withstood by the German commanders. Several hundred kilometres of their front disintegrated simultaneously and a hasty withdrawal began. The last big offensive mounted by the German army in World War II had collapsed. After this, the Germans never again launched a single large-scale attack, confining themselves to smaller operations, such as those at Balaton or in the Ardennes. The moral of this story is clear. If every platoon commander had had the right to call for fire support for his unit, the corps commander would have been unable to concentrate his reserves in the breach and the Front would never have broken through. Without this, there could have been no success.

4

Modern Soviet tactics, then, follow in the footprints of Jenghiz Khan, Bonaparte, the German generals who won the battle for France and the Soviet generals in the war against Germany.

Nuclear weapons have changed the face of war, as did artillery in the middle ages, the machine gun in the First World War and the tank in the Second. The principles of military science have not been affected by these changes, for they are immutable--disperse your forces and you will lose, concentrate them and you will win.

The only amendment which needs to be made to these ancient principles in the nuclear age is that a commander must concentrate his nuclear forces, too, in the main sector, together with the artillery, aircraft, and tanks which he assembles there. The threat of a nuclear response, too, plays a role in tactics. The concentration of forces can be completed very rapidly today, and they are then a target for the enemy's nuclear weapons, whereas earlier he was unable to use them during the comparatively long time they took to assemble. Otherwise everything remains as it was. If a single company breaks through the battalion commander supports it with his whole mortar battery, leaving the other companies to fend for themselves. Informed of the success of the company, the commander of the regiment orders his tank battalions to the sector and arranges for his artillery to provide concentrated fire support, then the divisional commander moves in his tank regiment and he too brings in his entire artillery reserves; in addition, he may arrange to have nuclear strikes carried out ahead of his troops. Then, flooding through like the torrent, rushing through the broken dam, come all the tanks and artillery of the Army, all the tanks, aircraft, artillery and rockets of the Front, of the Strategic Direction, of the Soviet Union and of its satellites!

5

One further misunderstanding needs clarification. Although a platoon or company commander is not entitled to summon up aircraft or the divisional artillery, this certainly does not mean that Soviet forces operate without fire support. The commander of a Soviet motor-rifle battalion (400 men) has 6 120mm mortars at his disposal. The commander of an American battalion (900 men) has only 4 106mm mortars. The commander of a Soviet regiment (2,100 men) has a battalion of 18 122mm howitzers and a battery of 6 Grad P multi-barrelled rocket launchers. The commander of an American brigade (4,000-5,000 men) has no fire weapons at all. Commanders of Soviet and American divisions have approximately the same quantity of fire weapons.

Commanders of Soviet battalions and regiments, not being entitled to call on their divisional commanders for help have enough fire weapons under their command to follow up successes achieved by any of their platoons, companies or battalions. Since they are equipped with these weapons, the divisional commander is free to make use of the full weight of his divisional artillery wherever he decides it is needed.

Rear Supplies

1

Many Western specialists believe that in order to carry out an operation of the sort described it would be necessary to assemble a massive concentration of material resources and that the Soviet command would encounter extreme difficulty in providing its enormous forces with the supplies they would need. This delusion is based on typical Western concepts of the organisation of the supply and replenishment of military forces.

The Soviet Army has a completely different approach to the problems of supply from that adopted in the West--one which avoids many headaches. Let us start from the fact that a Soviet soldier is not issued with a sleeping bag, and does not need one. He can be left unfed for several days. All that he needs is ammunition and this solves many problems. The problem of supplying Soviet troops in battle is thus confined to the provision of ammunition. We already know that each commander has transport sub-units at his disposal; every regiment has a company which can transport loads of 200 tons, every division a battalion with a capacity of 1,000 tons, every Army a transport regiment, and so forth. All this capacity is used solely to move up ammunition for advancing forces. Each commander allocates a large proportion of this ammunition to the sector which is achieving success--the remainder suffer accordingly.

No less important during a rapid advance is fuel--the life-blood of war. A basic approach has been taken to the problem of fuel-supply. As a condition for its acceptance by the armed Services, every type of Soviet combat vehicle--tanks, armoured personnel carriers, artillery prime movers, etc.--must have sufficient fuel capacity to take it at least 600 kilometres. Thus, Soviet Fronts would be able to make a dash across Western Germany without refuelling. Thereafter, the pipe-laying battalion of each Army would lay a line to the Front's main pipeline which would have been laid by the Front's pipe-laying regiment. The Front's pipelines would be linked with secret underground main lines which had been laid down in Eastern Europe in peacetime. In addition, the C-in-C of a Strategic Direction has under his command a pipe-laying brigade, which can be used to assist the Fronts. At the terminals of the pipelines the pipe-layers set up a number of refuelling centres, each of which can

simultaneously refuel a battalion or even a regiment. In addition, the Soviet Army is at present evolving techniques for using helicopters for fuel resupply. Let us take a division which is advancing. One of its tank battalions has stopped, on orders from the divisional commander, and is left behind by the other battalions. In a field by the road, on which the battalion has halted, a V-12 helicopter lands, carrying 40 or more tons of fuel. Within ten minutes it has refuelled all the tanks and taken off again. The battalion sets off for the front again, replacing another which halts to refuel. A single V-12 helicopter flying at low altitude at a speed of 250 kilometres an hour, can refuel a whole division in one day. It is not particularly vulnerable, since it is flying over its own rear areas, which are protected by the Air Defence Troops of the Land Forces. If trucks were used to supply a division hundreds of them would be needed, travelling on damaged, overloaded roads and presenting an excellent target. The destruction of a single bridge could bring them all to a halt. While a single truck carrying ten tons would take twenty-four hours to make a particular journey, a helicopter could do the same job in one hour. Even if helicopters were more vulnerable than endless convoys of trucks, Soviet generals would still use them, for time is far more precious than money during a war.

Provisions, spare parts, etc. are, quite simply, not supplied.

2

Now let us see how this works in practice. A division which is up to full strength, fully equipped, fed and fuelled, with more than 2,000 tons of ammunition, is moving up into action from the second echelon. This division can spend from three to five days in action, without rest for either its soldiers or its officers. The wounded are evacuated to the rear by the medical battalion, after first aid has been given.

Its companies, battalions and regiments waste no time waiting for spare parts for equipment which has been damaged. They simply throw it aside. The repair and refitting battalion mends whatever it can, cannibalising one tank to repair two or three others, removing its engine, tracks, turret and anything else which is needed. Any piece of equipment which is seriously damaged is left for removal to the rear by the Army's or the Front's mobile tank repair workshop.

In action, the division fights with great determination, but its numbers dwindle. Some of its fighting equipment is returned after repair, but not a great deal. After three to five days of hard fighting, the survivors are sent back to the second echelon, their place being taken by a fresh division which has been well fed and fully rested. From the remnants of the old division, a new one is quickly put together. Combat equipment is provided by the tank repair workshops. The fact that it belonged to some other division only the day before is immaterial. Reinforcements reach the new division from the hospitals--whether these soldiers and officers formerly belonged to other divisions, Armies or Fronts is also immaterial. With them arrive equipment from the factories and reservists--some of whom are older, others still very young boys. The division shakes down, exercises and allows its soldiers to get all the sleep they need. Then, after five days, it moves up into action, fully fed and fuelled, with 2,000 tons of ammunition.

Often, while it is reforming, a division receives entirely new equipment, straight from the factory, but it may also be issued with older material taken from store, while its own, or what remains of it, is taken from it for some other division which is also reforming, not far away.

Frequently, after a particularly punishing series of battles, a division cannot be reformed. In this event all its commanders from company level upwards are withdrawn and what is left of the division is administered by the deputies to the battalion and

regimental commanders and by the deputy divisional commander. This remnant will continue to fight, to the last man, while the divisional commander and his subordinates are in the rear, receiving new equipment and new soldiers. Within a short period of time they return to the battle in which what was left of their former division perished so recently.

One most important element needed for the rebuilding of a new division is its old colours. A fresh division can be set up very quickly around the old colours. But if the colours are lost--that is the end of the division. If such a thing should happen, all its former commanders are sent to penal battalions, where they expiate their guilt with blood, while their division is disbanded and used to bring others up to strength.

Here is an example from the history of the 24th Samara-Ulyanovsk Iron Division, with which I entered Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The division was established in 1918 and was one of the best in the Red Army. Lenin corresponded personally with some of its soldiers. It was active in the war against Germany from the very beginning of hostilities and distinguished itself in the fighting near Minsk until, as part of the 13th Army, it found itself encircled. Part of the division managed to break out but its colours were lost. Despite its past achievements, the division was disbanded and its various officers were tried by military tribunals. In 1944, when the Red Army once again reached and then crossed the Soviet frontiers, a special commission began questioning local inhabitants in an attempt to discover where Soviet officers and soldiers who had been killed in action during the first days of the war were buried. A peasant, D. N. Tyapin, told the commission how he had found the body of a Soviet officer, wrapped in a flag, and how he had buried the body, with the flag. The grave was immediately opened and the colours of the 24th Iron Division were found. The flag was immediately sent away for restoration and, just as quickly, a new division was formed and given the old colours, the battle honours and the title of the old division. Today the 24th Iron Division is one of the most famous in the Soviet Army. However, despite the fact that it distinguished itself in the battle which ended the war, it was never made a Guards division. It was not forgiven for the loss of its colours.

Part Six Equipment

What Sort of Weapons?

1

I adore weapons. Of every sort. I love military equipment and military uniforms. One day I shall open a small museum, and the first exhibit which I shall buy for my museum will be an American jeep. This is a real miracle weapon. It was designed before the Second World War and it served from the first day to the last, like a faithful soldier. It was dropped by parachute, it was soaked in salt water, it smashed its wheels on the stony deserts of Libya and sank into swamps on tropical islands. It served honourably in the mountains of Norway and of the Caucasus, in the Alps and the Ardennes. And, since the war, can any other military vehicle have seen so many battles--Korea, Vietnam, Sinai, Africa, the Arctic, South America, Indonesia, India, Pakistan? And is there any sort of weapon which has not been installed on a jeep? Recoilless guns, anti-tank rockets, machine guns. And it has worked on

reconnaissance duties, as an ambulance, a patrol vehicle, a commander and an ordinary military workhorse.

And how many types of tanks, guns, aircraft, rockets have come and gone in the time of the jeep? They were important and impressive, the jeep was grey and undistinguished. But they have gone and the jeep is still there. And how many times have they tried to replace the jeep? But it is indispensable. In the desert, more reliable than a camel, in the grasslands faster than a leopard, in the Arctic hardier than a Polar bear.

Another exhibit in my museum will be a Kalashnikov automatic assault rifle. Not one of those the terrorists used to kill the Olympic athletes or the one I had with me in Czechoslovakia or one of those the Communists killed doctors with in Cambodia. No, it will be one of the thousands captured by the American marines in Vietnam and used in their desperate attempt to halt Communism and to avert the calamity which threatened the Vietnamese people.

American soldiers in Vietnam often mistrusted their own weapons and preferred to use their Kalashnikov trophies. This was not so simple, for they could hardly expect to be supplied with the proper rounds for these weapons but they used them nevertheless, capturing more ammunition as they fought. What is the secret of the Kalashnikov? It is uncomplicated and reliable, like a comrade-in-arms, and these are the two qualities of greatest importance in a battle.

2

My museum will have weapons from everywhere--from Germany and Britain, France and Japan. But the greatest number will come from the Soviet Union. I hate the Communists, but I love Soviet weapons. The fact is that Soviet designers realised, decades ago, the simple truth that only uncomplicated and reliable equipment can be successful in war. This is as true as the fact that the only plans which will succeed are those which are simple and easily understood and that the best battledress is the simplest and most hard wearing.

Soviet requirements from a weapon are that it must be easy to produce and simple in construction, which makes it easier to teach soldiers to use it and simpler to maintain and repair.

Although the Soviet Union produced the same amount of steel as Germany, it built a much greater number of tanks. Moreover, because of the simplicity of their construction, it proved possible to repair tens of thousands of these tanks and to return them to battle two or even three times.

General Guderian admired Soviet tanks and wrote about them, enthusiastically and at length. He was insistent in urging that Germany should copy the T-34. The design of this Soviet tank was taken as a basis for the 'Panzer' and shortly afterwards for the 'Tiger-König'. But the German designers were unable to meet the most important requirement--simplicity of construction. As a result only 4,815 Panzer tanks were built in all, while no more than 484 'Tiger-König' tanks were ever produced. In the same period the Soviet Union built 102,000 tanks, 70,000 of which were T-34s.

In considering these figures it should be remembered that, while most German tank factories were subjected to bombing, many Soviet factories were lost altogether--the Kharkov plant was captured by the Germans in the first months of the war, and this was the largest Soviet factory and the birthplace of the T-34; the Stalingrad tank factory was the setting for the fiercest fighting it is possible to imagine. Leningrad was besieged, but, despite being without steel or coal, the tank factory there, which was subjected to constant artillery bombardment, continued to repair tanks for three years. On some occasions tanks which still were under repair had to be used to fire

through gaps in the walls at advancing groups of German soldiers. The only factory that was left was in the Urals and it was to this that the machinery was taken and set up, virtually in the open air, to produce the world's simplest and most reliable tank.

It should not be thought that Soviet equipment suffers any harmful effects because of its simplicity of design. Quite the reverse. In its time, the T-34 was not only the simplest but also the most powerful tank in the world.

3

When a MIG-25 landed in Japan, the Western experts who examined it marvelled at the simplicity of its design. Naturally, for propaganda purposes, the fighting qualities of this excellent aircraft were disparaged. One not particularly perceptive specialist even commented, 'We had thought it was made of titanium but it turns out to be nothing but steel.' It is, in fact, impossible to reach the speeds of which the MIG-25 is capable using titanium: yet the Soviet designers had managed to build this, the fastest combat aircraft in the world, from ordinary steel.

This is a most significant fact. It means that this remarkable aircraft can be built without especially complicated machine tools or the help of highly skilled specialists, and that its mass-production in wartime would be unaffected by shortages of important materials. Furthermore, this aircraft is exceedingly cheap to produce and could therefore be built in very great numbers if this were necessary. This is its most important characteristic; the fact that for two decades it has been the fastest interceptor aircraft in the world, with the highest rate of climb, is of secondary significance.

4

Technology is developing and each year equipment becomes more and more complex. But this does not conflict with the overall philosophy of Soviet designers. Of course, decades ago, their predecessors used the latest equipment available in their combat vehicles and aircraft and this equipment must then have been considered very complex. But the iron, unbreakable principle observed by Soviet designers retains its force. Whenever a new piece of equipment is being developed, making the use of highly complex tools and techniques unavoidable, there is always a choice of hundreds, even thousands of possible technical procedures. The designers will always select the very simplest possible of all the choices open to them. It would, of course, be feasible to produce an automatic transmission system for a jeep, but it is possible to get by with an ordinary one. This being so, there can be only one Soviet choice--the ordinary transmission.

I once saw a film comparing a Soviet and an American tank. A driver was given both models to drive and he was then asked--'Which is the better?' The American one, of course,' said the driver. 'It has automatic transmission, whereas in the Soviet tank you have to change gear, which is not easy in a heavy machine.' He was quite right--if you see war as a pleasant outing. But Soviet designers realise that any future war will be anything but this. They consider, quite correctly, that, if there are mass bombing attacks, if whole industrial areas are destroyed, if long-distance communications break down, mass production of tanks with automatic transmission would be out of the question. Equally it would be impossible to repair or service tanks of this sort which had been produced before the war. Accordingly, there can be only one choice--the ordinary, non-automatic transmission. This may be hard on the tank driver--he will get tired. But it will be easier for industry and for the whole country,

which will continue to produce tanks by the ten thousand on machines which have been set up virtually in the open air.

5

The simplicity of Soviet weapons surprises everyone. But each type of equipment which is produced is turned out in two variants--the normal one and the 'monkey-model'.

The 'monkey-model' is a weapon which has been simplified in every conceivable way and which is intended for production in wartime only.

For instance, the T-62 tank is one of the simplest fighting vehicles in the world. But as it was being designed, a still simpler version was also being developed, for wartime use. The 'monkey-model' of the T-62 does not have a stabilised gun, carries simplified radio and optical equipment, the night-vision equipment uses an infra-red light source to illuminate targets (a method which is twenty years old), the gun is raised and turned manually, steel rather than wolfram or uranium is used for the armour-plating piercing caps of its shells.

Soviet generals consider, justifiably, that it is better to have tanks like these in a war than none at all. It is intended that the 'monkey-model' approach will be used not only for building tanks, but for all other sorts of equipment--rockets, guns, aircraft, radio sets, etc. In peacetime these variants are turned out in large quantities, but they are only issued to countries friendly to the Soviet Union. I have seen two variants of the BMP-1 infantry combat vehicle--one which is issued to the Soviet army and another which is intended for the Soviet Union's Arab friends. I counted sixty-three simplifications which made the second 'monkey-model' different from the original version. Among the most important of these were: The 73mm gun has no loading or round selection equipment. Whereas in the Soviet version the gunner just presses the appropriate buttons and the round which he requires slides into the barrel, in the simplified model all of this has to be done by hand, and furthermore, the gun is not stabilised. The turret is rotated and the gun is raised mechanically. In the Soviet version this is done electrically--the mechanical system is there only as a back-up. The 'export' version is armed with the Malyutka rocket, the Soviet one with the 'Malyutka-M', which differs from the other model in having an automatic target guidance system. The 'monkey-model' is without the lead internal lining on the walls, which protects the crew against penetrating radiation and against flying fragments of armour in the event of a direct hit. The optical system is greatly simplified, as is the communications equipment, there is no automatic radiation or gas detector, there is neither an automatic hermetic sealing system nor an air filtration system, for use in conditions of very heavy contamination, no automatic topographical fixation system is fitted and many other systems are missing.

When one of these 'monkey-models' fell into the hands of Western specialists, they naturally gained a completely false impression of the true combat capabilities of the BMP-1 and of Soviet tanks. For what they were looking at was no more than a casing, or a container, like an empty money box which is of no value without its contents.

The Soviet Union is currently making deliveries abroad of T-72 tanks, MIG-23 fighters and TU-22 bombers. But these are different from the models with which the Soviet Army has armed itself. When one of a man's pockets contains banknotes and the other simply holds pieces of paper, it is quite impossible to tell which is which from the outside.

The current Soviet policy concerning equipment is a wise one--to amass first-class but very simple equipment in quantities sufficient for the first few weeks of a war. If the war continues, equipment will be produced on an enormous scale, but in variants

which have been simplified to the greatest possible extent. Experience of producing both standard and 'monkey' models is being gained in peacetime; the simpler variants are being sold to the 'brothers' and 'friends' of the USSR as the very latest equipment available.

Learning from Mistakes

1

The winter of 1969 was an exceptionally bitter one in the Soviet Far East. When the first clashes with the Chinese took place on the river Ussuri, and before combat divisions reached the area, the pressure exerted by the enemy was borne by the KGB frontier troops. After the clash was over, the General Staff held a careful investigation into all the mistakes and oversights which had occurred. It was quickly discovered that several KGB soldiers had frozen to death in the snow, simply because they had never received elementary instruction in sleeping out in temperatures below zero.

This was alarming news. A commission from the General Staff immediately carried out experiments with three divisions, chosen at random, and came to a depressing conclusion. Wartime experience had been irrevocably lost and the modern Soviet soldier had not been taught how he could sleep in the snow. Naturally he was not allowed a sleeping bag and of course he was forbidden to light a fire. Normally a soldier would spend nights when the temperature was below freezing-point in his vehicle. But what was he to do if the vehicle was put out of action?

The chiefs of staff of all divisions were immediately summoned to Moscow. They were given a day's instruction in the technique of sleeping out in snow at freezing temperatures, using only a greatcoat. Then each of them was required to convince himself that this was possible, by sleeping in the snow for three nights. (It should be remembered that March in Solnechnogorsk, near Moscow, is a hard month, with snow on the ground and temperatures below zero.) Then the chiefs of staff returned to their divisions and immediately the entire Soviet Army was put to a very hard test--that of spending a night in the open in numbing cold and without any extra clothing. It seemed as if those who were stationed in deserts in the south were in luck. But no--they were sent by turns to either Siberia or the north to be put through the same tough training. Thereafter, spending a night in the snow became a part of all military training programmes.

Two years before this, following the shameful defeats in Sinai, when it had become clear how much Arab soldiers fear tanks and napalm, urgent orders had been issued, making it compulsory for all Soviet soldiers and officers, up to the rank of general, to jump through roaring flames, and to shelter in shallow pits as tanks clattered by just above their heads, or, if they could not find even this protection, to lie on the ground between the tracks of the roaring vehicles.

The Soviet Army re-learned its lessons within a single day. I have felt napalm on my own skin, I have crouched in a pit as a tank crashed by overhead, and I have spent terrible nights in the snow.

At the beginning of the war, the Red Army had no idea how to organise the defence of the country or, particularly, of the large towns. It had never been taught how to do this. It had only learned how to attack and how to 'carry the war on to the enemy's territory'. However, the war began in accordance with the plans of the German General Staff rather than of their Soviet opponents. One catastrophe followed another. Attempts to defend Minsk lasted for three days, to hold Kiev for two days. Everyone

was at their wits' end to know how to organise things better. Kiev fell at the end of September and by October Guderian was approaching Moscow. Suddenly, something quite astonishing happened. Soviet defences became impenetrable, specifically those around Moscow, Tula and Tver'. For the first time in the course of the Second World War, the German military machine was brought to a standstill. It is said that freezing weather played its part in turning the tide. This was true enough in November and December, but in October the weather was sunny. Something had happened; a radical change had occurred. The next year, the battle for Stalingrad took place--the city was defended throughout the summer, and frosts played no part in the outcome. This campaign will go down in history as a model for the defence of a large city. A second such model is the defence of Leningrad which held out for almost three years, during which one and a half million of its citizens lost their lives. It was under attack for two winters and three summers. Freezing temperatures played no role here either--the city could have been taken during any season in these three years.

In the Soviet Army the dividing line between inability to perform a particular role and the capacity to carry it out with great professional skill is almost indiscernible. Transitions from one to the other occur almost instantaneously, not only in tactics, strategy and the training of personnel but also in equipment programmes.

2

At the beginning of the 1960s a discussion developed in the Western military journals about the need for a new infantry combat vehicle: this must be amphibious, well armoured, and highly manoeuvrable, and must have considerable fire-power. The Soviet military press responded only with a deathly silence. The discussion gathered strength, there was much argument for and against the proposition, intensive tests were carried out... the Soviet Union remained silent.

One night towards the end of 1966 heavy transporters arrived at our military academy carrying unusual vehicles of some sort, which were covered in tarpaulins. These were BMP-1s--amphibious, fiendishly manoeuvrable, well-armoured and heavily armed. By 1967 this vehicle was being produced in great numbers: meanwhile the discussion in the West continued. Only West Germany took any positive steps, by building the 'Marder'--which was an excellent vehicle, but was not amphibious and carried almost the same armament as previous German armoured personnel carriers. Sadly, it was also exceptionally complicated in design.

In the early 1980s, the discussion is still in progress in the West; the first tentative steps have been taken, but at present, as before, the United States has armoured personnel carriers which are armed only with machine-guns. Of course, Western specialists have found many faults in the construction of the BMP-1. But this is yesterday's product--and the 'monkey model' of it at that. The Soviet Union has been producing a second generation of BMPs in massive quantities for a long time now while, in the West, discussion continues.

The same has happened with military helicopters, self-propelled artillery, automatic mortars and many other types of equipment.

When will we be able to dispense with the tank?

1

One day, in Paris, I bought a book, published in 1927, on the problems of a future war. The author was sober-minded and reasonable. His logic was sound, his analysis was shrewd and his arguments unassailable. After analysing the way military equipment had developed in his lifetime, the author concluded by declaring that the proper place for the tank was in the museum, next to the dinosaur skeletons. His argument was simple and logical: anti-tank guns had been developed to the point at which they would bring massive formations of tanks to a complete halt in any future war, just as machine guns had completely stopped the cavalry in the First World War.

I do not know whether the author lived until 1940, to see the German tanks sweeping along the Paris boulevards, past the spot at which, many decades later, I was to buy my dusty copy of his book, its leaves yellowing with age. The belief that the tank is reaching the end of its life is itself surprisingly long-lived. At the beginning of the 1960s, France decided to stop production of tanks, because their era was over. It is fortunate that this delusion was shattered by the Israelis' old 'Sherman' tanks in the Sinai peninsula. Israel's brilliant victory showed the whole world, once again, that no anti-tank weapon is able to stop tanks in a war, provided, of course, that they are used skilfully.

The argument used by the tank's detractors is simple--'Just look at the anti-tank rockets--at their accuracy and at their armour-piercing capability!' But this argument does not hold water. The anti-tank rocket is a defensive weapon--part of a passive system. The tank, on the other hand, is an offensive weapon. Any defensive system involves the dispersal of forces over a wide territory, leaving them strong in some places and weak in others. And it is where they are weak that the tanks will appear, in enormous concentrations. Even if it were possible to distribute resources equally, this would mean that no one sector would have enough. Try deploying just ten anti-tank rockets along every kilometre of the front. The tanks will then choose one particular spot and will attack it in their hundreds, or perhaps thousands, simultaneously. If you concentrate your anti-tank resources, the tanks will simply by-pass them. They are an offensive weapon and they have the initiative in battle, being able to choose when and where to attack and how strong a force to use.

The hope that the perfection of anti-tank weapons would lead to the death of the tank has been shown to be completely unfounded. It is like hoping that the electronic defences of banks will become so perfect in the future that bank robbers will die out as a breed. I assure you that bank robbers will not become extinct. They will improve their tools, their tactics, their information about their targets and their methods of misleading their enemies and they will continue to carry out raids. Sometimes these will fail, sometimes they will succeed, but they will continue so long as banks continue to exist. The robbers have the same advantage as tanks--they are on the offensive. They decide where, when and how to attack and will do so only when they are confident of success, when they have secretly discovered a weak spot in the enemy's defences, whose existence is unknown even to the enemy himself.

2

Soviet generals have never been faced with problems of this sort. They have always known that victory in a war can only be achieved by advancing. To them defensive operations spell defeat and death. In the best case, such operations can only produce a deadlock, and not for long, at that. Victory can only be achieved by means of an offensive--by seizing the initiative and raining blows on the enemy's most vulnerable areas.

Thus, to win, you must attack, you must move forward unexpectedly and with determination, you must advance. For this you need a vehicle which can travel

anywhere to destroy the enemy, preferably remaining unscathed itself. The one vehicle which combines movement, fire-power and armour is the tank. Perhaps, in the future, its armour will be perfected, perhaps it will not have tracks but will travel in some other way (there have been wheeled tanks), perhaps it will not have a gun but be armed with something else (there have been tanks armed solely with rockets), perhaps all sorts of things will be changed, but its most important characteristics--its ability to move, to shoot and to defend itself--will remain. As long as there are wars, as long as the desire for victory lasts, the tank will exist. Nuclear war has not only not written it off, but has given it a new lease of life--nothing is so suited to nuclear war as a tank. To survive a nuclear war you must put your money on these steel boxes.

The Flying Tank

1

Drive a tank on to an airfield and park it near a military aircraft. Next put a helicopter between the tank and the aircraft. Now, look at each of them and then answer the question--which does the helicopter resemble more--the tank or the aircraft?

I know what your opinion will be. You don't need to tell me. But the Soviet generals believe that to all intents and purposes the helicopter is a tank. In fact they find it difficult to distinguish between the two. Certainly there is very little in common between the helicopter and the aircraft. Small details, like the ability to fly, but nothing more.

Of course, they are right. The helicopter is related to the tank, not to the aircraft. The reasoning behind this is simple enough--in battle a tank can seize enemy territory and a helicopter can do the same. But an aircraft cannot. An aircraft can destroy everything on the surface and deep below it, but it can not seize and hold territory.

For this reason, the Soviet Army sees the helicopter as a tank--one which is capable of high speeds and unrestricted cross-country performance, but is only lightly armoured. It also has approximately the same fire-power as a tank.

The tactics employed in the use of helicopters and tanks are strikingly similar. An aircraft is vulnerable because in most cases it can only operate from an airfield. Both the helicopter and the tank operate in open ground. An aircraft is vulnerable because it flies above the enemy. A helicopter and a tank both see the enemy in front of them. To attack, a helicopter does not need to fly over the enemy or to get close to him.

The introduction of the helicopter was not greeted with any particular enthusiasm by the Air Forces, but the Land Forces were jubilant--here was a tank with a rotor instead of tracks, which need not fear minefields or rivers or mountains.

It is therefore not surprising that the airborne assault brigades (which are carried by helicopter) form part of the complement of Tank Armies or of Fronts, which use them for joint operations with Tank Armies.

At the present moment the Soviet MI-24 is the best combat helicopter in the world. This is not just my personal opinion, but one which is shared by Western military experts. Knowing the affection which Soviet Marshals have for their helicopters, I prophesy that even better variants of these flying tanks will appear in the next few years. Or are they, perhaps, already flying above Saratov or somewhere, even though we have not been shown them yet?

The Most Important Weapon

1

Before the Second World War each army had its own approach to questions of defence. Drawing on their experience of the First World War, the French considered that their main problem was to survive artillery bombardments, which might continue for several days or even several months. The German generals decided that they must make their forces capable of repelling attacks by all enemy arms of service. The Soviet generals concluded that they must avoid diluting their resources and that they must concentrate on the most important of the arms of service. Since for them this was the tank, they saw defence purely as defence against tanks. Their defence system could therefore only be considered complete when their forces were asked to repulse tank attacks. If we can only stop the enemy's tanks, the generals reasoned, everything else will be halted, too.

They were right, as many German generals, the first of whom was Guderian, have acknowledged. Many of the battles which took place on Soviet territory followed a standard scenario. The German forces would launch a very powerful tank attack, which, from the second half of 1942 onwards the Soviet troops always succeeded in halting. This was the course of events at Stalingrad, at Kursk and in Hungary, in the Balaton operations. From 1943 onwards, having exhausted their capacity for launching such attacks, the German forces were ordered by Hitler to adopt a strategy of defence in depth. But this was not the way to oppose tanks. This strategy did not enable the German army to halt a single breakthrough by Soviet tanks.

2

Remembering the war, Soviet generals insist that defence must mean, first and foremost, defence against tanks. The enemy can gain victories only by advancing and, in the nuclear age, as before, offensive operations will be carried out by tanks and infantry. Other forces can not carry out an offensive: their only role is to support the tanks and the infantry. Thus, defence is essentially a battle against tanks.

The most important weapon in achieving victory is the tank. The most important weapon in depriving the enemy of victory is the anti-tank weapon. The Soviet Union therefore devotes great attention to the development of anti-tank weapons. As a result, it is frequently the first in the world with really revolutionary technical and tactical innovations. For example, as early as 1955, the USSR began production of the 'Rapira' smoothbore anti-tank gun, which has an astonishingly high muzzle velocity. In its introduction of this weapon it led the West by more than a quarter of a century. In the same year a start was also made with production of the APNB-70 infra-red night sight, for the 'Rapira'. Sights of this type were not issued to Western armies for another ten years.

The Soviet Army takes exceptionally strict measures to safeguard the secrets of its anti-tank weapons. Many of these are completely unknown in the West. The Chief Directorate of Strategic Camouflage insists that the only anti-tank weapons which may be displayed are those which can be exported--in other words the least effective ones. The systems which may not be exported are never demonstrated but remain unknown from their birth, throughout their secret life and often, even, after their death. We will say something about these later.

3

Because they consider anti-tank warfare to be so important, Soviet generals insist that every soldier and every weapon system should be capable of attacking tanks.

Every soldier is therefore armed with a single-shot 'Mukha' anti-tank rocket launcher. These rocket launchers are issued to all motor transport drivers and to those belonging to staff, rear-support and all other auxiliary sub-units.

When the BMP-1 infantry combat vehicle was being developed, the designers suggested a 23mm gun as its armament--this would be effective against infantry, and is simple and easy to load. But the generals opposed this; as a first priority, the vehicle must be capable of opposing tanks; it must have anti-tank rockets and a gun which, even though small, could be used against tanks. The BMP-1 was therefore fitted with a 73mm automatic gun, capable of destroying any enemy tank at ranges of up to 1,300 metres, with anti-tank rockets which can be used over greater ranges. The fact that 20mm automatic guns are fitted to Western infantry combat vehicles is met with friendly incomprehension by Soviet military specialists: 'If such a vehicle is not capable of taking on our tanks, why was it built?'

It is true that a light anti-aircraft gun has recently been mounted on the BMP. But this does not indicate any alteration in its main function. This gun is installed as an auxiliary weapon, to supplement the anti-tank rockets and also as an anti-helicopter weapon. In other words, it is intended for use against the flying tank. Incidentally, the decision to fit it was taken only after the designers had been able to demonstrate that it could also be used against conventional, earthbound tanks.

All other Soviet weapon systems, even if they are not primarily intended as anti-tank weapons, must also be able to function as such. Accordingly, all Soviet howitzers are supplied with anti-tank shells and anti-aircraft guns are much used against tanks--their teams are trained for this role and are issued with suitable ammunition.

But this is not all. The new AGS19 Plamya rocket-launcher and the Vasilek automatic mortar can also be used against tanks, as a secondary function. They each have a rate of fire of 120 rounds a minute and both are capable of flat trajectory fire against advancing tanks.

Finally, the BM-21, BM-27, Grad-P and other salvo-firing rocket launchers can fire over open sights and flood oncoming tanks with fire.

Why are Anti-tank Guns not Self-propelled?

1

Why does the Soviet Union not use self-propelled anti-tank guns? This is a question which many are unable to answer. After all, a self-propelled gun is far more mobile on the battle-field than one which is towed, and its crew is better protected. This question has already been partially answered in the last chapter. The Soviet Union has some excellent self-propelled anti-tank weapon systems--but it does not put them on display. Nevertheless, it is true that towed guns are in the majority. Why is this so? There are several reasons:

Firstly: A towed anti-tank gun is many times easier to manufacture and to use than one which is self-propelled. In wartime it might be feasible to reduce the production of tanks; the effect of this would simply be to reduce the intensity of offensive operations. But a drop in the production of anti-tank weapons would be catastrophic. Whatever happens, they must be produced in sufficient quantities. Otherwise any tank breakthrough by the enemy could prove fatal for the whole military production

programme, for the national economy, and for the Soviet Union itself. In order to ensure that these guns are turned out, whatever the situation, even in the midst of a nuclear war, it is essential that they should be as simple in construction as possible. It was no chance that the first Soviet smoothbore guns to be produced were anti-tank guns. Smoothbore guns for Soviet tanks were brought out considerably later. Although a smooth barrel reduces the accuracy of fire, it enables muzzle velocity to be raised considerably, and, most important of all, it simplifies the construction of the gun.

Secondly: A towed gun has a very low silhouette, at least half that of a tank. In single combat with a tank, especially at maximum range, this offers better protection than armour plate or manoeuvrability.

Thirdly: Anti-tank guns are used in two situations. In defence, when the enemy has broken through, is advancing fast and must be stopped at any price. And in an offensive when one's own troops have broken through and are advancing rapidly, and the enemy tries to cut through the spearhead at its base, with a flank attack, cutting off the advancing forces from their rear areas. In both these situations, anti-tank guns must stop the enemy's tanks at some pre-determined line, which he must not be allowed to cross. Towed guns are compelled, by the weight of their construction, to fight to the death. They are unable to manoeuvre or to move to a better position. Certainly, their losses are always very high. That is why they are traditionally nicknamed 'Farewell, Motherland!' But by stopping the enemy on the predetermined line, the anti-tank sub-units can save the whole division, Army and sometimes the whole Front. This is what happened at Kursk. If the anti-tank guns had been self-propelled, their commander would have been able to withdraw to a more advantageous position when he came under enemy pressure. This would have saved his small anti-tank sub-unit, but it might have brought catastrophe to the division, the Army, the Front and perhaps to several Fronts.

Lest seditious thoughts should enter the head of the anti-tank commander, and so that he should not think of pulling back in a critical situation, his anti-tank guns have no means of propulsion. In battle their armoured tractors are housed in shelters; they would scarcely be able to pull the guns away from the battle, under the deadly fire of the enemy. Only one option is available to the crews--to die on the spot, as they prevent the enemy from crossing the line which they are holding.

During the war, one of the main reasons for the unyielding stability of the Soviet formations was the presence among them of huge but virtually immobile units of anti-tank guns.

The Favourite Weapon

1

The Soviet commander's favourite weapon is the mortar. A mortar is simply a tube, one end of which rests on a base plate, while the other end points skywards, supported on two legs. It would be difficult to devise a simpler weapon, which is why it is such a favourite.

In 1942, a terrible year for the USSR, during which military production fell to a catastrophically low level, the mortar was the one weapon which remained available to every commander.

In three and a half years of war, the Soviet Union produced 348,000 mortars. In the same period, Germany produced 68,000. All the remaining countries put together produced considerably less than Germany. Furthermore, the Soviet mortars were the

most powerful in the world and the number of bombs produced for each was the highest recorded anywhere.

Soviet commanders value the mortar so highly because of its reliability and its almost primitive simplicity, because it only takes a few minutes to teach a soldier how to use it, and because it needs almost no maintenance--its barrel is not even rifled! And they also like its immediate readiness, in any situation, to fire quite heavy bombs at the enemy, even though it lacks complete accuracy.

The pressure generated inside a mortar barrel when it fires is relatively low and therefore a mortar, unlike a gun or a howitzer, can fire cast-iron rather than steel bombs. This adds two further advantages--firstly, simplicity and cheapness of production, secondly the fact that when a cast iron bomb bursts it shatters into very small splinters, which form a dense fragment pattern. Steel gun and howitzer shells are not only more expensive but are more solidly constructed and therefore produce a smaller quantity of splinters, which do not cover the area so densely.

In France and the US, after the war, mortars were improved. They had rifled barrels which gave them greater accuracy. As early as 1944, a Soviet designer, B. L. Shavyrin, had suggested that Soviet mortars should be rifled, but he was firmly rebuffed--it was simpler to make ten smoothbore mortars than one with rifling. Even if a rifled mortar was twice as effective as a smoothbore one, the latter would therefore still be a far better proposition, if it was only twice as effective, but cost ten times as much to produce, it must rate as a very poor weapon. I entirely agree with this point of view.

But what about accuracy? you will ask. It is of no significance. Soviet commanders have chosen a different way of approaching the problem. If you have to pay for accuracy with complexity of design, you are following the wrong path. Quantity is the better way to exert pressure. Since two simple, smoothbore mortars can do the work of one rifled one we will use the two simple ones, which will have the additional advantage of producing a lot more noise, dust and fire than one. And this is by no means unimportant in war. The more noise you produce, the higher the morale of your troops and the lower that of the enemy. What is more, two mortars are harder to destroy than one.

Yet another approach to the problem was devised. The lack of accuracy of Soviet mortars is more than made up for by the explosive power of their bombs. To Soviet commanders, the best mortar is a large one--the bigger it is the better. At present the largest American mortar is their 106.7mm, while the smallest Soviet one is 120mm. The biggest American mortar bomb weighs 12.3 kilogrammes, the smallest Soviet one 16 kilogrammes. But besides this small mortar, the Soviet Army has a 160mm version, which fires a 40 kilogramme bomb and a 240mm version which fires a 100 kilogramme bomb.

Anyone who has seen 120mm mortars firing, especially if he was near them, will never forget the experience. I have actually seen 12 240mm mortars in action together. These fire not 16 kilogramme but 100 kilogramme bombs. Within twenty minutes, each mortar fired 15 bombs. This represented, as I later calculated, a total of 18 tons of explosives and cast-iron splinters. I found the noise absolutely staggering. It was amazing that men could retain their sanity in the midst of it. While the firing was in progress, one had the impression that thousands of tons of explosive were going off each second and the whole process seemed to last an age. The astonishing destructive power of these mortars makes up for any inaccuracy in aiming or in dispersion. I believe that this is the correct approach. Only one country, Israel, has had a chance to test the value of this exceptionally cheap and effective policy. Her army has 160mm mortars. I sincerely hope that she will progress further--she is on the right path.

The outstanding simplicity, reliability and ease of maintenance of the 240mm mortar are vital qualities, and they played a decisive role when the moment came to decide which should be the first artillery weapon to fire nuclear projectiles. It was the obvious choice and it is now many years since it was selected for this role. It was also a good choice, being comparatively small, manoeuvrable and easier to conceal than a gun. At the same time, it has a huge calibre, which solves several technical problems. Its muzzle velocity is considerably lower than that of a gun or a howitzer. There is therefore no danger that the bomb will explode as it is fired or that it will detonate accidentally. What could be better?

In 1970, a self-propelled version of the 240mm mortar was introduced. It was installed on a tracked GMZ chassis. This greatly increased its mobility, its ability to move across rough country and the protection provided for the crew. This development further increased the affection which the Soviet generals reserve for the mortar. At this period only Fronts and General Headquarters reserves were equipped with these weapons. However, Army and divisional commanders, as one man, implored every meeting they attended at the Ministry of Defence to give each divisional commander a battalion of these mortars and they also asked that each Army commander should have at least a regiment of them. Their pleas were heard and soon they received the mortars. And why not? It is after all, the simplest and the most economical weapon imaginable.

It's all right for the generals, you will say, but what about the battalion commanders? Must they be content with what their predecessors had in the Second World War? The number of mortars in a battalion could hardly be increased, for that would mean that half the infantry would have to be reclassified as artillery. Nor is it possible to increase the calibre of battalion mortars. This would make them too heavy to follow the infantry wherever it goes.

A way out of this situation, too, has been found. In 1971 the 'Vasilek' automatic mortar was issued to battalions. Its introduction did not mean that the insistence on simplicity had been dropped. This automatic weapon is as uncomplicated as a Kalashnikov. When necessary, it can fire single shots. As an automatic weapon it fires 120 bombs a minute. It differs from all earlier mortars in being capable of both high and flat trajectory fire. It can fire both normal and anti-tank bombs. If necessary, a battalion commander can move his whole mortar battery to a sector threatened by enemy tanks and can shower them with 720 anti-tank bombs every minute.

The Vasilek is being produced on a self-propelled, armoured chassis and also in a towed variant. Six of them give a battalion commander greatly increased capability to bring concentrated fire to bear on a decisive sector.

Why do Calibres Vary?

1

When the Soviet Union first displayed the BMP-1 infantry combat vehicle in a parade, its designation and the calibre of its guns were unknown. From careful examination of photographs, Western analysts concluded that the calibre of the gun must be between 70 and 80mm. In this range there was only one gun--the 76mm, which is still, as it has been for many year, a standard weapon in both the Soviet

Army and the Soviet Navy. This gun was the most widely distributed of all Soviet artillery weapons before, during and after the war and its calibre occurs again and again in designations of Soviet equipment (e.g. T-34-76, the SU-76, the PT-76). Since this seemed a safe deduction, Western handbooks listed the new Soviet vehicle as the BMP-76.

Then several BMP-1s were captured in the Middle East and carefully examined. To the amazement of the specialists, it was established that the calibre of the gun was 73mm. This was virtually the same as the 76mm, so why were the Soviet designers not using this trusted calibre? Why the variation?

Meanwhile, photographs of new Soviet tanks--the T-64 and T-72--had begun to appear in Western journals. Painstaking analysis showed that the calibre of the gun carried by both these tanks was 125mm. But this calibre did not exist, either in the USSR or elsewhere. Many of the experts refused to accept the analysts' conclusion, asserting that the new tanks must have 122mm guns. 122mm--like 76mm--is a standard calibre, which has been in continuous use since before the Revolution. The 122 howitzer is the largest in use in the Soviet Army. Most heavy armoured vehicles had and still have guns of this calibre--the IS-2, IS-3, T-10, T10-M, SU-122, ISU-122, IT-122 and most recently the new, self-propelled 'Gvozdika' howitzer, even though this appeared considerably later than the T-64. But then the new Soviet tanks began to appear abroad and all doubt ended--they did have 125mm guns. What was all this about? Why were all previous standards being abandoned? What lay behind it all?

2

The switch from existing calibres was not the result of a whim; rather, it was a carefully thought-out policy--one which has a long history. It was initiated by Stalin himself, a few hours before Germany's surprise attack on the USSR.

It was on the eve of the war that the Soviet naval and coastal artillery were first issued with the excellent 130mm gun. This was subsequently used as an anti-tank gun and as a field gun and finally, in a self-propelled variant. Also just before the war, in the spring of 1941, a highly successful rocket launcher was developed in the USSR. This was the BM-13, which could fire 16 130mm rockets simultaneously. It later became known to the Soviet Army as the 'Katyusha' and to the Germans as the 'Stalin Organ'. Naturally, the existence of both the gun and the rocket launcher were kept entirely secret.

In the first days of June 1941 the new rocket launcher was shown to members of the Politburo, in Stalin's presence. However, it was not fired, because artillery shells instead of rockets had been delivered to the test range. The mistake was understandable, in view of the great zeal with which secrecy was being preserved--how could the ordinance officers possibly have known of the existence of the 130mm rockets, which bore no resemblance to artillery shells?

Knowing Stalin, those present assumed that everyone responsible for this mistake would be shot immediately. However, Stalin told the Chekists not to get involved and went back to Moscow.

The second demonstration took place on 21 June at Solnechnogorsk. This time everything went off very well. Stalin was delighted with the rocket launcher. Then and there, on the range, he signed an order authorising its issue to the Soviet Army. However, he directed that henceforth, in order to avoid confusion, the rockets should be referred to as 132mm, not as 130mm.

Accordingly, while the rocket launcher continued to be known as the BM-13 (13cm being 130mm), the rockets were henceforth referred to, despite their true calibre, as 132mm. That very night the war began.

During the war, projectiles of all types were fired in enormous quantities, reaching astronomical totals. They were transported for thousands of kilometres, under constant enemy attack. While they were being moved they had to be trans-shipped again and again and this was done by schoolboys, by old peasants, by convicts from prisons and camps, by German prisoners and by Soviet soldiers who had only been in the army for two or three days. Orders and requisitions for the rockets were passed hastily by telephone from exchange to exchange and made all but inaudible by interference. But there were no mistakes. Everyone could understand that 'We need 130s' was a reference to artillery shells and it was equally clear that '1-3-2' meant rockets.

In 1942 the design of the rockets was modernised and their grouping capability and destructive effect was improved. In the process, they became slightly thicker, and their calibre was increased to 132mm--thus coming to match their designation.

Stalin's decision had proved correct and, as a result, a series of artillery weapons with unusual calibres were developed during the war. They appeared, of course, only when an unusual shell or rocket was designed. For instance, in 1941 a start was made with the development of a huge mortar which was needed to fire a 40 kilogram bomb. The calibre of the mortar could have been, for instance, 152mm, like the great majority of Soviet guns and howitzers. Obviously, however, a howitzer shell would be unsuitable for a mortar and vice versa. A mortar fires a particular type of projectile, which must itself be of a certain calibre. This was the requirement which resulted in the development of the 160mm mortar. Immediately after the war, 40mm grenade launchers appeared. There had never before been a weapon of this particular calibre in the Soviet Army. There were 37mm and 45mm shells. But a grenade launcher uses its own type of projectile and a special calibre was therefore selected for it.

Soviet designers took steps to correct past mistakes, which had been tolerated until Stalin's sensible decision. The calibre of the standard Soviet infantry weapon is 7.62mm. In 1930, a 7.62mm 'TT' pistol was brought into service, in addition to the existing rifles and machine-guns of this calibre. Although their calibre is the same, the rounds for this pistol cannot, of course, be used in either rifles or machine-guns.

In wartime, when everything is collapsing, when whole Armies and Groups of Armies find themselves encircled, when Guderian and his tank Army are charging around behind your own lines, when one division is fighting to the death for a small patch of ground, and others are taking to their heels at the first shot, when deafened switchboard operators, who have not slept for several nights, have to shout someone else's incomprehensible orders into telephones--in this sort of situation absolutely anything can happen. Imagine that, at a moment such as this, a division receives ten truckloads of 7.62mm cartridges. Suddenly, to his horror, the commander realises that the consignment consists entirely of pistol ammunition. There is nothing for his division's thousands of rifles and machine-guns and a quite unbelievable amount of ammunition for the few hundred pistols with which his officers are armed.

I do not know whether such a situation actually arose during the war, but once it was over the 'TT' pistol--though not at all a bad weapon--was quickly withdrawn from service. The designers were told to produce a pistol with a different calibre. Since then Soviet pistols have all been of 9mm calibre. Why standardise calibres if this could result in fatally dangerous misunderstanding?

Ever since then, each time an entirely new type of projectile has been introduced, it has been given a new calibre. Naturally, shells for the BMP-1 gun are not suitable for the PT-76 tank--that was already obvious when work on the design of the new vehicle and of its armament was begun. Therefore it should not have a 76mm gun but something different--for instance, a 73mm one. The shells for the new T-62 tank were

of a completely new design and would obviously not be suitable for use in the old 100mm tank guns. In that case, the calibre here too, should be something quite different--for instance, 115mm. The same went for the T-64 and T-72. Their shells had to be quite different from those of the old heavy tanks. So that the old and the new types of ammunition should not be mixed up, it was decided that the new shells should be 125mm whereas the old ones were 122mm. There are dozens of similar examples.

There are exceptions. In some cases it is essential to use a particular calibre and no other. For example, the 122mm, 40-barrel multiple rocket launcher must be of precisely that calibre--no more and no less. Its rockets are therefore given a special designation; they are called 'Grad' rockets. This is the only way in which they are ever referred to--they are never called '122mm' rockets. One makes this a habit from one's very first day. Then, if someone orders '1-2-2' he is referring to howitzer shells, but if he orders 'Grad', he means rockets.

3

Western analysts find it hard to understand why the Soviet Union has turned away from its old, well-tryed standard calibres. Soviet analysts, for their part, wonder why Western designers stick so stubbornly to old specifications. The British have an exceptionally powerful 120mm tank gun. An excellent weapon. They also have a useful 120mm recoilless gun. One of them was developed some time ago, the other more recently. Obviously, they use quite different shells. Why not use different calibres--one could be 120mm, the other 121mm? Or leave the calibres as they are; just change the designation of one to 121mm. Why not?

The same applies to West Germany and to France. Both countries have excellent 120mm mortars and both are working on the development of new 120mm tank guns. Of course this works well enough in peacetime. Everything is under control when the soldiers are professionals, who are quick to understand a command. But what happens if, tomorrow, middle-aged reservists and students from drama academies have to be mobilised to defend freedom? What then? Every time 120mm shells are needed, one will have to explain that you don't need the type which are used by recoilless guns or those which are fired by mortars, but shells for tank guns. But be careful--there are 120mm shells for rifled tank guns and different 120mm shells for smoothbore tank guns. The guns are different and their shells are different. What happens if a drama student makes a mistake?

The Soviet analysts sit and scratch their heads as they try to understand why it is that Western calibres never alter.

Secrets, Secrets, Secrets

1

The 41st Guards Tank Division was issued with T-64 tanks at the beginning of 1967. Of course, its soldiers knew nothing about this. They joined the division, served it honourably for two years and then went back to their homes; other soldiers came, learned something about tanks but went home having heard nothing about the T-64 and never having seen one. In 1972 the division was reequipped with the new T-72s and the T-64s were sent to Germany. The soldiers, of course, knew nothing about this--neither that the division had received new tanks nor that the old ones had gone.

The soldiers serve in a division, they are trained by it for war but they know nothing about its tanks.

To the Western reader this may seem rather strange. However, when I came to the West and took my first look at Western armies, I was astounded to discover that Western soldiers knew the names of their tanks, and that they drive and fire from them. This seemed absurd to me, but I was unable to obtain any explanation of this strange policy.

In the Soviet Army everything is secret. When the war began it was not only the German generals who knew nothing about the T-34 tank--even the Soviet generals knew no more than they did. It was being mass-produced, but this was kept secret. Not even the tank forces knew of its existence. The new tanks were moved from the factories to some divisions, but only to those which were a long way back from the frontiers. They were ferried by a factory team (totalling 30 drivers for the whole of the Soviet Union) in convoys, the like of which had never been seen before, escorted by NKVD officers, who were forbidden even to talk to the drivers. They travelled only at night and the tanks were always completely covered with tarpaulins. The routes they took were closed to all other traffic and heavily guarded. When the tanks reached their destination, they were off-loaded by the factory team, who then drove them into vehicle parks, surrounded by high walls, inside which they were put into storage.

The tank crews were quickly instructed on various features of the new tanks, but they were not told what the new tanks were called or shown them. The gunners were, however, introduced to the new gunsights and taught how to use them, firing from old tanks. The drivers were given intensive training in the old tanks after being told that there was a new tank in the offing, which had to be driven rather differently. The drivers did not, of course, know whether the division already had this new tank or not. The tank commanders, too, were told a certain amount and shown how to service the engine, but they were not told the name of the tank from which the unusual engine came or given its horse-power. In short, the division was simply retrained, but only used the old tanks.

Then came the war, unexpected and terrifying. The first echelon divisions, which had good, although not secret equipment, were torn to pieces in the first battles. While this was happening, the divisions in the rear areas received orders to go into the tank parks, to take the tanks out of storage and to familiarise themselves with them. It took them two weeks to do this and after a further two weeks they reached the front. Then in these completely unknown tanks, the divisions took on Guderian's armoured columns. It was soon clear that they could operate them very well. After all, a driver who can handle a Volkswagen like a champion would not take long to master a Mercedes. That is how it was done in the Soviet Army then and how it will be done in future--they learn on a Volkswagen, but keep the Mercedes secretly hidden away until it is really needed.

But, of course, the T-34 was not the only surprise awaiting the Germans. They discovered the existence of the 'KV' heavy tank only when they met it in action; before that they had not even heard of it. Nor, for that matter, had its Soviet tank-crews had any idea of its existence--the KV had been secretly stored away. The German troops soon met the 'Stalin Organ' for the first time, too, and panicked when they did so. In peacetime sub-units armed with these excellent weapons had masqueraded as pontoon-bridge battalions, whose uniforms they had worn, with the result that most of their own soldiers had not realised that they were in reality rocket troops. Their retraining started only when the war began, but even then only the battery commanders knew the correct designation of their rocket launchers. The remaining officers, NCOs and other ranks did not even know what the equipment which they were using in battle was called. The launchers were marked with the letter

K (standing for the Komintern factory in Voronezh). Naturally, no one, even the battery commanders, knew what this stood for and the result was that the soldiers on every front almost simultaneously christened these splendid weapons 'Katerina', 'Katya' or 'Katyusha'. It was under this last name that they went down in history. Their correct designation--BM-13--was only allowed to be used in secret documents from the middle of 1942 onwards and it was not used in unclassified papers until after the end of the war.

2

The policy of observing the strictest rules of secrecy has completely justified itself. For this reason it is universally accepted and is applied with ever greater rigour. As a result, officers serving in a nuclear submarine may know, for instance, the output of the boat's reactor, if they are involved in its maintenance, but they will not know the maximum depth to which the boat can dive, since this does not concern them. Others may know this maximum depth, but will not know the range of the missiles which the submarine carries.

This policy of secrecy is applied to the production of heavy assault guns, mounted on tank chassis. A tank with a fixed turret is an excellent weapon. True, its arc of fire is reduced, but against this, a more powerful gun can be installed, the quantity of ammunition it carries can be increased, its armour can be strengthened without increasing its overall weight and, most important, it is much easier to manufacture. Guns of this sort are indispensable, when used in close conjunction with tanks with normal turrets. Both the Soviet and the German generals came to realise their value during the war, but since then only the former have continued to produce them. In order that other countries should not be tempted to introduce this simple but excellent weapon, all Soviet heavy assault guns are protected by strict security measures. Their production has continued, without a break, ever since the war. Every motor-rifle regiment (inside the USSR, but not abroad) has one battery of heavy assault guns. In the 1950s the powerful D-74 (122mm) was mounted on a T-54 tank chassis, then the M-46 gun (130mm) was installed on the T-62 tank chassis. All regiments, without exception, have heavy assault guns of this type. They are kept in mothballs for decades, never seeing the light of day. Their crews train on T-54 and T-62 tanks. Sometimes they are shown the gunsights of the assault guns. They know the tactics which will be used and they know how to service the engines. If war should break out their commander would disclose to them that instead of tanks they were about to be equipped with something which was similar but far more powerful and better armoured. In the middle of the 1970s all these guns were replaced by more powerful models but, naturally, they were not melted down. Instead they were either sent to the Chinese frontier to be installed in concrete emplacements or sent to holding depots, in case they should come in useful one day.

The same secrecy is maintained around the IT-1 and IT-2 anti-tank rocket launchers and the Rapira-2 and Rapira-3 anti-tank guns.

The IT-1 is built on a T-62 tank chassis but is armed with the 'Drakon' anti-tank rocket instead of a gun. Each Army has one battalion of IT-1s, which are kept in mothballs, well concealed and never seen even by the battalion's own soldiers. If the Army to which it belongs is posted abroad, the battalion remains on Soviet territory, to all appearances an ordinary tank battalion. Its soldiers are given instruction in tactics and driving and maintenance of the vehicles but ordinary tanks or training simulators are used for this.

In this way it is possible to serve out your time in the Soviet Army, learning nothing--or very little--about its equipment.

How Much Does All This Cost?

1

Nothing at all. I will repeat that. All this costs nothing at all.

Let us imagine that you work at a full-time job, but that your wife does not. You give her an allowance and she has no other source of income. You start to give her driving lessons and decide to make yourself some money by doing so. After all, you are using up energy, time, labour, nerves and petrol. But now answer a question--is it more in your interest to make your wife pay through the nose for her lessons, or to keep the price low? Which will be more profitable for you?

If you were giving lessons to a neighbour, of course, you would ask as high a price as you felt you could. But what should you do when you are teaching your own wife? The more money you make her pay, in the hope of becoming rich, the more she will need from you, for where else could she get it?

If you lower your fee, you will need to give your wife less, and she will let you have less back. You soon realise that whatever you charge she will just be taking money from your pocket and then returning it to you.

Now, turn your thoughts to the 6th Guards Tank Army, with its thousands of tanks and tens of thousands of men. Imagine yourself to be the Communist Pharaoh, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Something strange--goodness knows what--is going on in Czechoslovakia. To safeguard yourself you decide to move the 6th Guards Army up to your frontier with this fraternal state. It is only possible to move a thousand tanks over a distance of a thousand kilometres by rail, for tanks wear out roads very fast--and vice versa. How much is this going to cost you? You summon the Minister of Railways (being nationalised, the railways are fully controlled by the people--in other words by the government--that is, by you personally) and put this question to him. He tells you--'100 million rubles'. This means that you will have to take 100 million rubles out of the State's pocket and give it to the Army; the Army pays the money to the railways, which, in turn, puts this, the profit they have made, back into the State's pocket. What on earth is the point of taking it out in the first place, if it was going to be put back almost immediately? So, in fact, it does not get taken out in the first place. The General Secretary just summons the Minister and tells him to move the 6th Guards Tank Army. The Minister says 'Yes, Sir', clicks his heels and does as he has been told. That is all. No money is needed for the operation. The same system applies to any movement by individual soldiers. An officer comes to a railway station and shows papers which say that in the national interest he is to proceed to the Far East. What would be the point in giving the officer money, for him to pay a State organisation, which must then refund the same money to the State?

In the Soviet Union everything has been nationalised. Private deals are forbidden. Since everything is in the hands of the State, prices for goods produced for the State have no meaning. Tanks, guns, rockets--none has any price inside the State. It is like growing a strawberry in your garden, selling it to yourself and eating it, moving the money you pay for it from your right pocket to your left one. Your strawberry only acquires a price if you sell it to someone else and put the money he pays you into your pocket. In the same way, Soviet tanks acquire a price only when someone abroad buys them.

For the State, which owns all the safes in the land, to move billions of rubles from one safe to another is meaningless. So nothing is moved. A Ministry simply receives an order to produce a thousand tanks or rockets or bombers and to deliver them to the armed forces. That is all. If a minister does not carry out his orders he loses his place at the ministerial feeding-trough. Money of a sort is paid to the workers but it is really nothing but the equivalent of ration cards. Workers are given just enough to buy bread or potatoes, a poor quality suit every three years and vodka every day. This money is printed by the State but it is not recognised by anyone abroad, since it can not be exchanged for gold.

In the Soviet Union there are virtually no taxes, because they are not needed. Everything is in the hands of the State, everything has been nationalised. A Soviet banknote is essentially a ration card, issued by the State for work done in its interests. Why hand out ten ration cards and then take five of them back again? The State does not grow any richer by re-acquiring these cards, which do not help to make more meat available in the shops. Accordingly, the State, which prints these cards, produces only enough to buy the amount of bread, potatoes, rotten meat and old fashioned clothes which it is prepared to distribute to its citizens. The latter eat the meat and give the ration cards back to the State, which hands them out again.

Sometimes the State becomes more concerned about producing tanks than food, but it must continue to hand out ration cards to the people. This creates inflation, since now the ration cards can not even purchase bread and this soon has a calamitous effect on the whole huge military machine.

It is a good thing that there are capitalists in the world, ready to come forward with help at times like these.

Copying Weapons

1

The Soviet Union has designed a large number of first-class weapons, among them the T-34 tank, the Kalashnikov automatic assault rifle and the IL-2 Shturmovik ground attack aircraft. Even today, in the early 1980s, no one has succeeded in improving on the performance of the Soviet 130mm gun, although it was developed as long ago as 1935. The Soviet Union was the first to use rockets fired from an aircraft--this was in August 1939 in Mongolia, in combat with Japanese aircraft. A Soviet motor torpedo boat (under Egyptian colours) was the first in history to use rockets to sink an enemy ship. The Soviet Union was the first to use the BM-13 salvo-firing rocket launcher. The Soviet Union was the first, many years ago, to realise the value of smoothbore guns, with their astonishingly high muzzle velocity, and it was the first to mass-produce automatic mortars and many other excellent types of weapon.

At the same time, the Soviet intelligence services, the largest in the world, search unceasingly for anything new in the field of military equipment. The enormous extent of Soviet activity in this sphere beggars description. Soviet intelligence succeeded in obtaining all the technical documentation needed to produce nuclear weapons, in winning over a number of distinguished scientists and in ideologically recruiting others as agents.

Since the war, the Soviet Union has succeeded in copying and in putting into mass production the American B-29 bomber, British Rolls-Royce aircraft engines, American lorries and German V-2 rockets. It has also completed the development of a number of German rocket designs which were still unfinished at the end of the war. It has

stolen plans for the construction of French anti-tank rockets, American air-launched missiles, laser range-finders, stabilisers for tank guns, rocket fuel, special dye-stuffs and many, many other highly important products.

Part Seven

The Soldier's Lot

Building Up

1

For 35 years (between the ages of 17 and 50) all Soviet men--and all the Soviet women whose professions might make them useful to the Armed Forces--remain on the register of those liable for military service, forming the Armed Forces reserve. This register, listing all these individuals, is maintained by Rayon City, Oblast, and Republic Commissars, who come under the orders of the Organisational Directorate of the Military Districts and, thus, ultimately, of the Chief Organisational Directorate of the General Staff.

The tens of millions of people on the register may be called up without notice, if either partial or full mobilisation is announced.

As soon as a young man is 17, he appears before a medical board and is listed on the register. The next year, as soon as he is 18, he is called up for service in the Armed Forces. Depending on the date of his birthday, this may happen in the spring (in May or June), or in the winter (in November or December).

Conscripts spend two years in all Services and arms of service, except for the Navy, in which they serve for three years.

Every year, two intakes, each of approximately a million young men join the Armed Forces and those who have completed their service are demobilized. Thus, every six months something like a quarter of the total number of other ranks changes over. New men join, the older ones leave, remaining on the reserve until they are 50.

2

Private Ivanov received instructions to report to the local assembly point on 29 May. In preparation he did three things:

-- he got together with a gang of fellow spirits to beat up some of his enemies, in accordance with the principle--`Today you help me to knock the hell out of the people I don't like and then tomorrow I'll help you to do the same.'

-- he told his girl-friend that she was to wait two years for him, to go out with no one else and to write to him frequently--`Otherwise you'll see, I'll come back and kill you. You know me.'

-- on the night of 28 May he drank himself into complete insensibility. Parents realise that unless they hand over their drunken son to the assembly point by midday he will be punished under military law.

A convoy takes the crowd of drunk and half-drunk youths to the station, where they are put on a train and taken to their place of duty.

A soldier is not entitled to choose an arm of service, the area in which he will serve or the trade which he will follow in the army. Long before Ivanov received his call-up papers, the General Staff had sent all Military Commissariats details of the men they would be receiving and instructions on where they were to send them. Naturally, the

General Staff does not go into details, saying no more than '150 men, of category «0» are to be sent to Military unit 54678'. This may be a unit of diversionary troops, it may be a nuclear submarine, or it may be something very secret indeed. The Military Commissar can only guess. (If the number has four figures the unit belongs to either the KGB or the Ministry of Internal Affairs. If it has five, it is a Ministry of Defence unit.) This is all he is told except that there is sometimes a minor additional requirement, such as 'Category «0», but all are to be tall and physically well-developed.'

The Military Commissar prepares groups of soldiers by categories--for instance, 5 men from Category 1, 100 from Category 2 and 5,000 from Category 3 to military unit 64192. The Military Units receive their own instructions--'You will receive 100 men from Khabarovsk, 950 from Baku, 631 from Tbilisi.'

Each Military District makes up several troop transports, provides escorts and officers, and sends them off to different corners of the huge country, while mixed columns move off to distant rocket batteries, fortified areas and motor-rifle divisions.

One requirement is sacrosanct when these selections are being made: whenever possible, Russians must not be stationed in the RSFSR, Ukrainians in the Ukraine or Latvians in Latvia. If there are disturbances among the Russian population of, for instance, Murom or Tolyatti or Omsk, these will be crushed, sometimes with considerable bloodshed, by non-Russian soldiers. If a strike breaks out in Donetsk (as one did in 1970) there will be no Ukrainian soldiers in the area. The soldiers stationed there are Tatars, Kirghiz, Georgians. It is all the same to them who they shoot at. What is important is that there is no one in the crowd confronting them whom they know and no one in it who speaks a language they can understand.

It is also essential to mix all the nationalities together in divisions, regiments and battalions. If one regiment contains too many Lithuanians and another too many Tatars, this must result from a slip-up by some military bureaucrat. The punishment for such mistakes is harsh.

The movement of such colossal numbers of men takes up two whole months. Surprisingly, the machine works extremely smoothly, rather like a sausage machine--all sorts of pieces of meat, some onions, some rusks, and some garlic are put in at one end and out of the other come solidly compressed rolls of well-mixed human material.

3

A column of new recruits is not a sight for anyone with weak nerves. Traditionally, anyone joining the army dresses in such rags that you wonder where on earth he found them. For recruits know that any more or less useable article--socks which are not in tatters, for instance--will immediately be seized from them by the soldiers escorting the column. So they dress in the sort of rags which should be thrown on a bonfire--a mechanic's boiler suit, solid with grease, a painter's working clothes daubed with paint of all colours, even a sewage-collector's overalls. Many of them will have black eyes, acquired in farewell fights with their local enemies. All are unshaven, uncombed, shaggy, dirty--and drunk, into the bargain.

All the officers and soldiers escorting the column are armed. The roughest, toughest sergeants and other ranks are chosen for this job. They stop the fights which keep breaking out, giving the recruits new bruises as they do so. The young newcomers quickly feel the weight of a sergeant's fist and soon realise that it is best to do what he tells them--and that the same goes for a soldier, who may himself have spent a fortnight in the same sort of column, swapping punches with those around him, as recently as a year ago.

Anyone who has once seen for himself what a column of these new recruits looks like will understand why there are no volunteers in the Soviet Army, why there never could be and why there is no need for them. The whole system is too inflexible, too regulated, and too tightly controlled to concern itself with any individual's opinions or wishes. Everyone is simply grabbed, indiscriminately, as soon as he reaches 18, and that's that.

How to avoid being called up

1

At some juncture long ago, before Stalin, in Lenin's day, the wise decision was taken that the state apparatus should be manned, not by riff-raff, but by comrades of proven worth, who were responsible, experienced and dedicated to the popular cause. In order that the state should not be infiltrated by alien elements at some stage in the future, it was decided that successors to this ruling group should be prepared and that it was essential to ensure that these young people were appropriately educated. Educational establishments were therefore set up to prepare the future ruling class, and these were filled, for the most part, with the children of the comrades of proven worth, who were themselves dedicated to the revolutionary cause. The comrades were very pleased with this plan and have never since contemplated any deviation from the course approved by Lenin.

As an illustration--the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, Comrade A. A. Gromyko is, of course, a person of proven worth. It follows that his son, too, must be dedicated to the people's cause; this means that Comrade Gromyko's son can become a diplomat and, provided that it is possible to check that Comrade Gromyko's son has made a success of this career, the grandson of Comrade Gromyko, too, can enter the diplomatic service. Comrade Gromyko's deputy is Comrade Malik. He, too, is a trusted person, dedicated to the national cause and this means that the road to a diplomatic career is also open to both his son and his grandson.

The comrades of proven worth got together and agreed among themselves that, since their children were already dedicated to their Motherland and prepared to defend its interests throughout their entire lives, there was no need for them to enter the army. Accordingly, when the sons of the comrades of proven worth reach 17 they are not required to register for military service; instead, wasting no time, they enter the Institute of International Relations. After qualifying there, they go off to spend not just two years but the whole of their lives defending the interests of their Motherland at the most exposed portion of the front line in the battle against capitalism--in Paris, Vienna, Geneva, Stockholm or Washington. This is why the children of the comrades of proven worth do not have to be ferried around in dirty railway trucks, are not punched in the mouth by sergeants, and do not have their gold teeth pulled out, and why, too, their girl-friends do not need to wait for them for two or three years.

Lest the absurd idea should enter anyone's head that the sons of the comrades of proven worth are not defending socialism, with weapons in their hands, they are given military awards for their service from time to time. The son of that most responsible and trusted of all comrades, Brezhnev, for instance, spent years defending the interests of socialism in the barricades of Stockholm; on his return from this most crucial operation he was given the military rank of Major-General even though he has never spent a day in the army, or indeed as much as an hour locked in a railway wagon with a lot of grubby recruits.

In the KGB, as in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they read the works of Lenin and therefore, following his precepts, they, too, admit to their training establishments the sons of comrades of proven worth, rather than just anyone. And because these boys, too, will have to spend their lives defending socialism, they are also given exemption from military service.

The Workers' and Peasants' State contains a mass of other important state organisations and undertakings for which future leaders must be prepared. To train them an enormous network of higher educational institutions has been set up. The comrades of proven worth have decreed that anyone entering one of these higher educational institutions is to be granted exemption from military service. The universities organise military training courses, of limited scope, and these are considered sufficient.

2

In every town there is at least one institute which is ultimately controlled, through a series of intermediate authorities, by the First Secretary of the Oblast Committee of the Party. Naturally, the First Secretary's own children do not attend this institute. They study somewhere in Moscow. But he has a Second Secretary and a Third; they have deputies, who themselves have assistants, who have consultants. All of these have children. Formerly all those concerned with the administration of the Oblast sent their children straight to the local institute where, since they were the children of trusted comrades, they were received with open arms. Nowadays, things have changed somewhat. The Third Secretary of the Oblast Committee will telephone his opposite number in a nearby town--'My son is due for call-up in the autumn and your boy next spring. If you'll look after my son, I'll do the same for yours.' A mutually beneficial exchange is arranged. A couple of lotus-eaters are admitted to two higher educational institutions, without being required to pass any examinations. However, they find themselves in neighbouring towns, rather than at home, and they are also regarded as 'workers and peasants' rather than as the sons of comrades of proven worth. But then, first in one town and then in the other, the two Third Secretaries are suddenly seized with the desire to improve the living conditions of students. Not everyone can be given a rent-free apartment, of course, so the Oblast Committee allocates just one. Thus only one student gets one--our own, dear 'worker-peasant'. With considerable effort he obtains his certificate of higher education. Everyone else is sent off to work in Siberia but he is found a place with the Oblast Committee, as an assistant. Time passes quickly, he climbs steadily upwards and before long his own son is growing up and will soon be eligible for army service. Meanwhile, however, the system has become more complicated. Mutually helpful exchanges between two neighbouring towns are too conspicuous. So our worker-peasant doesn't enrol his son in the nearest town. Instead, the son of someone who appears to be a true member of the working class enters an institute in a third town, without having to pass exams, while from this third town to ours comes an apparently straightforward young man, the son of some official or other, whose name no one knows. A flat is quickly found for this young man, who then gets a post with the Oblast Committee. He finds a job there for someone else, who reciprocates by letting him have a car, without payment, and who in his turn does the same for yet another person. The wheel turns on and hundreds of thousands of parasites avoid having to endure the railway wagons or the brutish armed sergeants.

3

But what happens if your father is not among those at the helm of the Workers' and Peasants' State? In that case if he will just slip the Military Commissar a few thousand rubles, you can be found unfit for military service and your name removed from the register. The Military Commissar in Odessa was shot for doing this, the same happened in Kharkov, in Tbilisi, every year for five years in succession, they sent a Military Commissar to gaol but that did not solve the problem so they had to shoot the sixth one. They would hardly have shot a Military Commissar--a Colonel--for misdeeds involving a few thousand rubles. The sums concerned must have been very large indeed.

And if your father has not got a few thousand rubles to spare? Then you could cut off your trigger finger with an axe. Or you could stick a small piece of foil on your back when you go for your X-ray, so that they decide you have tuberculosis and turn you down for the army. You could go to prison. But if you haven't the courage for any of these, brother, you'll find yourself in that dirty railway wagon.

If you can't, we'll teach you; if you don't want to, we'll make you

1

The column of recruits finally reaches the division to which it has been allocated. The thousands of hushed, rather frightened youths leave the train at a station surrounded by barbed wire, their heads are quickly shaven, they are driven through a cold bath, their filthy rags are burned on huge fires, they are issued with crumpled greatcoats, tunics and trousers that are too large or too small, squeaky boots and belts. With that the first grading process is completed. It does not occur to any of them that each of them has already been assessed, taking into account his political reliability, his family's criminal record (or absence of one), participation (or failure to participate) in Communist mass meetings, his height and his physical and mental development. All these factors have been taken into account in grading him as Category 0, 1, 2, and so forth and then allocating him to a sub-category of one of these groups. There will be no more than ten Category 0 soldiers in a whole motor-rifle division--they will go to the 8th department of the divisional staff. In each intake there will be two or three of them, who will replace others who are being demobilised, and who will themselves join the reserve. They have no idea that they are in this particular category or that files exist on them which have long ago been checked and passed by the KGB.

Category 1 soldiers are snapped up by the divisional rocket or reconnaissance battalions or by the regimental reconnaissance companies. Category 2 soldiers are those who are able to understand and to work with complicated mathematical formulae. They are grabbed by the fire-control batteries of the artillery regiment, of the anti-aircraft rocket regiment and of the self-propelled artillery battalions of the motor-rifle and tank regiments. And then there are the soldiers of my own arm of service, the tank crews--Category 6, thanks to the swine who do the planning in the General Staff. But nothing can be done about that--the army is enormous and bright soldiers are in demand everywhere. Everyone is after the strong, brave, healthy ones. Not everyone can be lucky.

A detachment is set up in each battalion, to handle the new intake. The battalion commander's deputy heads this and he is assisted by some of the platoon commanders and sergeants. Their task is to turn the recruits into proper soldiers in the course of one month. This is called a 'Young Soldier's Course'. It is a very hard

month in a soldier's life; during it he comes to realise that the sergeant above him is a king, a god and his military commander.

The recruits are subjected to a most elaborate and rigorous disciplinary programme; they clean out lavatories with their tooth-brushes, they are chased out of bed twenty or thirty times every night, under pressure to cut seconds off the time it takes them to dress, their days are taken up with training exercises which may last for sixteen hours at a stretch. They study their weapons, they are taught military regulations, they learn the significance of the different stars and insignia on their officers' shoulder boards. At the end of the month they fire their own weapons for the first time and then they are paraded to swear the oath of allegiance, knowing that any infringement of this will be heavily punished, even, perhaps, with the death-sentence. After this the recruit is considered to have become a real soldier. The training detachment is disbanded and the recruits are distributed among the companies and batteries.

2

Socialists make the lying claim that it is possible to create a classless society. In fact, if a number of people are thrown together, it is certain that a leading group, or perhaps several groups, will emerge--in other words different classes. This has nothing to do with race, religion or political beliefs. It will always happen, in every situation of this sort. If a group of survivors were to reach an uninhabited island after a shipwreck and you were able to take a look at them after they had been there only a week, you would undoubtedly find that a leader or leading group had already emerged. In the German concentration camps, no matter what sort of people were imprisoned together, they would always establish themselves in stratified societies, with higher and lower classes.

The division into leaders and followers occurs automatically. Take a group of children and ask them to put up a tent; do not put one of them in charge but stand aside and watch them. Within five minutes a leader will have emerged.

A group of short-haired recruits nervously enters an enormous barrack room, in which two, three or even five hundred soldiers live. They quickly come to realise that they have entered a class-dominated society. Communist theory has no place here. The sergeants split the young soldiers up by platoons, detachments and teams. At first everything goes normally--here is your bed, this is your bedside locker in which you can keep your washing-kit, your four manuals, brushes and your handbook of scientific communism and nothing else. Understand? Yes, sergeant.

But at night the barrack-room comes alive. The recruits need to understand that it contains four classes--the soldiers who will be leaving the army in six months, those who will go after a year, a third class who have eighteen months still to serve and, lastly, they themselves, who have a full two years to go. The higher castes guard their privileges jealously. The lower castes must acknowledge their seniors as their elders and betters, the seniors refer to inferiors as 'scum'. Those who still have eighteen months to serve are the superiors of the new recruits, but scum, naturally, to those who have only a year to go.

The night after the new intake has arrived is a terrible one in every barracks: the naked recruits are flogged with belts, and ridden, bareback, by their seniors, who use them as horses to fight cavalry battles and then they are driven out to sleep in the lavatories while their beds are fouled by their elders and betters.

Their commanders know what is going on, of course, but they do not interfere; it is in their interests that the other ranks should be divided among themselves by barriers of real hatred.

The lowest class have no rights whatsoever. They, the scum, clean the shoes and make the beds of their seniors, clean their weapons for them, hand over their meat and sugar rations, sometimes even their bread to them. The soldiers who are soon to be released appropriate the recruits' new uniforms, leaving them with their own worn-out ones. If you are in command of a platoon or a company you are quite content with the situation. You order your sergeants to get something done--digging tank pits, for instance. The sergeants give the senior soldiers this job to do and they in turn hand it on to the scum. You can be confident that everything will be finished in good time. The senior soldiers will do nothing themselves but they will make each of the scum do enough for two or three men. You can take your sergeants off into the bushes and hand out your cigarettes; whatever you do, don't fuss. Wait until someone comes to report that the job has been done. This is your moment: appear like the sun from behind the clouds, and thank the senior soldiers for their hard work. I assure you--both the senior soldiers and the scum will love you for it....

Six months pass and a new consignment of scum joins your sub-unit. Now those who suffered yesterday have a chance to vent their rage on someone. All the humiliations and insults which they have suffered for six months can now be heaped on the newcomers. Meanwhile those who still insult and beat them up continue to be regarded as scum by their own superiors.

These are the circumstances in which a soldier begins to master the rudiments of the science of war.

1,441 Minutes

1

'Roll on my demob!' 'I wish you all a speedy demob--make sure you deserve it!' They've taken everything else away, but they can't take my demob!' 'Demobilization is as inevitable as the collapse of capitalism.' These are sentences you will see scribbled on the wall of any soldiers' lavatory. They are cleaned off every day but they are soon back again, in paint which is still wet.

Demobilization comes after two years' service. It is the day-dream of every soldier and NCO. From the moment a recruit joins the army, he begins to cross off the days to his demob. He lists the days left on the inside of his belt or ticks them off on a board, a wall, or on the side of his tank's engine compartment. In any military camp, on the backs of the portraits of Marx, Lenin, Brezhnev, Andropov and Ustinov you will find scores of inscriptions such as '103 Sundays left to my demob', accompanied by the appropriate number of marks, carefully ticked off one by one in ink or pencil. Or '730 dinners to my demob' and more marks. Or, frequently '17,520 hours to my demob' or, even more often, '1,051,200 minutes to my demob'.

A soldier's day is split up into a number of periods of so many minutes each and this makes it most convenient for him to calculate in minutes. The Soviet soldier reckons that his day lasts just a little bit longer than it does for any other inhabitant of the planet, so in his calculations he reckons that a day contains 1,441 minutes--a minute longer than it does for the rest of us.

A minute is the most convenient division of time for him, although he has to count in seconds, too.

2

The soldier's second day-dream, after his demobilization, is to be allowed to sleep for 600 minutes. Theoretically, he is allowed 480 minutes for sleep. Of course, one of the scum gets only half this: as he moves into a higher caste and becomes more senior he sleeps longer and longer. A month before his demobilization a senior soldier hangs a note above his bed 'Do Not Tilt! To be Carried Out First In Case Of Fire.'

Reveille is at 0600 hours. Wake up, jump out of bed, trousers and boots on, run outside for a rapid visit to the lavatory, sprint to the door, which is jammed with people, another sprint and you are on the road outside, past the sergeants who are lying in wait for the 'last on parade'. By 0605 the company is already moving briskly along the roads of the military camp. In rain and wind, in hail and snow--just boots and trousers, chests bare. Running and PT until 0640--35 minutes of really hard physical exercise.

Then the company goes back to the barrack-room with 20 minutes to wash and make beds. During this time the scum have to make both their own beds and those of the senior soldiers. At 0700 there is morning inspection; the sergeant-major spends half an hour on a rigorous check of the company's general tidiness, haircuts, contents of pockets, etc. After this, the company falls in and moves off, bawling a song and marching in time to it, to the dining hall. An attentive observer would notice that the number of soldiers in the company is now greater by a quarter than it was during the PT parade. Actually, when the orderly first shouted, 'Company. On your feet!' at reveille, by no means everyone jumped hastily out of bed. The most senior of the soldiers, those with only six months to go before their demob, get up unwillingly and slowly, stretching, swearing quietly to themselves, not joining in the rush to the lavatory or tearing off to the parade. While the rest of the company marches round the corner, they go quietly about their own affairs. One may stretch out under his bed to sleep for another half hour, others doze behind the long row of greatcoats, which hang from pegs by the wall, and the rest may tuck themselves away somewhere at the back of the barrack-room by a warm pipe from the furnace-room. Whatever they choose to do, they don't turn out for PT with the rest of the company. They keep an eye out for the patrolling duty officers, quietly changing their hiding places if he approaches. Eventually they go and wash, leaving their beds to be made by the scum.

The Soviet Army serves a meagre breakfast. A soldier is allowed 20 grammes of butter a day, but since, theoretically, 10 of these are used for cooking, there are only 10 grammes on his plate. With this, for breakfast, he receives two slices of black bread, one of white, a bowl of kasha and a mug of tea, with one lump of sugar.

Butter and sugar are used as a sort of currency, with which to placate one's seniors for yesterday's mistakes or for some piece of disrespectful behaviour. They are also used as stakes for bets so that many of the soldiers have to hand over their breakfast butter or sugar--or both--to those who have been luckier than them at guessing the results of football or hockey matches.

There is not much bread, either, but if a soldier somehow manages to get hold of an extra slice, he will always try to make his tiny portion of butter cover it too, so that it is bread and butter rather than just bread that he is eating. Several soldiers from my company once spent a day working in the bakery and, of course, they helped themselves to a few loaves, which they shared with the other members of their platoon. Each of them had ten or fifteen slices of bread to spread his butter on and was able to eat as much as he wanted, for the first time for months. But there was very little butter indeed for each slice. I was not far away, and, seeing how they were enjoying themselves, I went over and asked how they could tell which of the slices had butter on them. They laughed and one held a piece of bread above his head and gently tilted it towards the sun. The answer became clear--a slice on which there was even the smallest scraping of butter reflected the sunlight.

At 0800 hours there is a regimental parade. The deputy regimental commander presents the regiment for inspection by the commander. Then the day's training, which lasts for seven hours, begins. The first hour is a review period, during which officers from the regimental or divisional staffs test the extent to which officers, NCOs and soldiers are ready to proceed with the forthcoming day's work. Soldiers are questioned on what they learned during the previous day, what training they received and what they have memorized. For me, as for any commander, this was a most uncomfortable hour. During this review period, too, orders by senior commanders from regimental level up to that of the Minister of Defence himself are read out, together with the sentences imposed on the previous day by Soviet Army military tribunals--outlines of cases involving five to ten years' imprisonment, and sometimes death sentences.

If the review period ends early, the rest of the hour is used for drill. After this come three periods, each of two hours. During these each platoon works in accordance with a training schedule which covers the following subjects:

- Political training
- Tactics
- Weapon training
- Drill
- Technical training
- Weapons of mass destruction and
- Defence against these
- Physical training

The number of hours spent on each subject varies considerably, depending on the arm of service and the Armed Service in which the soldiers are serving. However, the general plan of work is the same everywhere--a review period, drill and then six hours of work on the subjects listed above in accordance with individually arranged training schedules.

Ninety-five per cent of all work, except for political training, is done out of doors, rather than in classrooms--in the open country on ranges, in tank training areas, in tank depots, etc. All periods, except for political training, involve physical work, which is often very strenuous.

For instance, tactical training may involve six hours digging trenches in blazing sun or in a hard frost, high-speed crossings of rivers, ravines, ditches and barricades, rapid erection of camouflage--and everything is done at the double. Instruction in tactics is always given without equipment. Thus, a tank crew is told to imagine that they are in a tank, attacking the enemy 'on the edge of the wood over there'. Having run to the wood, the crew returns and the tank commander explains the mistakes they made--they should have attacked not on the crest of the hill but in the gully. Now, once again... Using this system of instruction, you can quickly teach a crew, who may be unable to understand complicated explanations, how an enemy should be attacked, and how to use every hollow in the ground to protect their own tank in battle. If they don't, well they just run off again, and again, and again for the whole six hours if necessary.

Weapon training involves study of weapons and of combat equipment. But you should not imagine that a platoon sits in a classroom, while the instructor describes the construction of tanks, guns and armoured personnel carriers.

The sergeant shows a young soldier an assault rifle. This is your personal weapon. You strip it like this. You are allowed 15 seconds to do this. I will show you and then we will practise it--do it again--and again--now do it with this blindfold. And again... This is our tank. It carries 40 shells, each of which weighs between 21 and 32 kilogrammes, according to type. All the shells are to be loaded from these containers through this hatch into the tank's ammunition store. You've got 23 minutes to do this. Go! Now do it again--and again--and again.

Any process, from changing a tank's tracks or its engine to running in rubber protective clothing during CW training, is always learned by practical experience and practised again and again until it becomes entirely automatic, every day, every night for two years. So many seconds are allowed for each part of the operation. Make sure you do it this time: if you don't you'll have to practise it again and again and again, at night, on Sundays, on Sunday nights.

Exceptional physical strain is put upon Soviet soldiers. During his first days in the army a young recruit loses weight, then, despite the revolting food, he begins to put it on, not as fat, but as muscle. He starts to walk differently, with his shoulders back, a mischievous twinkle appears in his eye and he begins to acquire self-confidence. After six months, he begins to develop considerable aggression, and to dominate the scum. In his battles with the latter, he wins not only because of tradition, or the support of his seniors, his NCOs and officers--he is also physically stronger than they are. He knows that recruits coming into the army are far weaker than he is--he has six months of service behind him. Within a year he has become a real fighting-man.

A Soviet soldier is forced to adapt to circumstances. His body needs rest and he will find a thousand ways to get it. He learns to sleep in any position and in the most unlikely places. Don't ever think of giving an audience of Soviet soldiers a lecture with any theory in it--they would fall asleep at your very first words.

At 1500 hours the platoon, exhausted and dripping with sweat, returns from training, and tidies itself up. Hastily, everyone cleans boots, washes, puts things right--at the double, all the time. Dinner parade--they march off, singing, to the dining hall and spend 30 minutes there over disgusting, thin soup, semi-rotten potatoes with over-salted fish and three slices of bread. Hurry, hurry. 'Company, on your feet! Fall in!' Dinner is over. They march off, singing, to the barrack-room. From 1600 to 1800 they clean weapons, service equipment, clean the barracks and tidy the surrounding area. From 1800 to 2000 'self-tuition'. This means training which is devised not by the divisional staff but by the sergeants. '50 press-ups. Now do it again... You didn't make much of a job of loading those shells. Try it again... Now once more... The time you took to run three kilometres in your respirator was poor. Go and do it again.'

From 2000 to 2030--supper. Kasha or potatoes, two slices of bread, tea, a lump of sugar. 'Butter?--you had that this morning.' After supper a soldier has 30 minutes of free time. Write a letter home, read a paper, sew up a senior soldier's collar-lining for tomorrow's inspection, clean his boots until they gleam, iron his trousers.

At 2100 hours there is a formal battalion, regimental or divisional parade. Evening roll-call, a run-through of the time-table for tomorrow and of the results of today's training, more sentences imposed by military tribunals and then an evening stroll. This takes the form of 30 minutes of drill, with time kept by drum-beat, and training songs, yelled out by several thousand voices. At 2145 the soldier reaches the barracks again, washes, cleans his teeth, polishes and cleans everything for next morning. At 2200--lights out. For those, that is, who are not on night exercises. The timetable makes provision for 9 hours of night training each week. No allowance is made for loss of sleep. These night exercises can, of course, go on for any length of time. And those

who are not on night exercises may be got out of bed at any moment by a practice alert.

4

Saturday is a working-day in the Soviet Army. What makes it different from other days of the week is that the soldiers have a film-show in the evening. No--not about James Bond, but about Lenin or Brezhnev.

Sunday is a rest-day. So reveille is at 0700 hours, instead of 0600. Then, as always, morning toilet, PT, breakfast. And then free time. This is what the political officer has been waiting for. There is one of these 'Zampolits', as they are called, in each company, battalion, regiment and so on. The Zampolit can only work with the soldiers on Sundays, so his whole energy is devoted to that day. He arranges tug-of-war competitions and football matches--more running! He also gives lectures about how bad things were before the Revolution, how good life is nowadays, how the peoples of the world groan under the yoke of capitalism and how important it is to work hard to free them. In some regiments the soldiers are allowed to sleep after dinner. And how they sleep--all of them! On a bright sunny Sunday, sometimes, a division looks like a land of the dead. Only very occasionally is a single figure--the duty officer--to be seen walking around. The silence is astonishing and unimaginable at any other time. Even the birds stop singing.

The soldiers sleep on. They are tired. But the Zampolits are not tired. They have been resting all week and now they are bustling about, wondering what to organise next for the soldiers. How about a cross-country run?

Sunday does not belong to the Soviet soldier, and so he reckons, reasonably enough, that this day, too, lasts 1,441 minutes instead of 1,440.

Day After Day

1

Practice makes perfect. This is a wise saying, which the Soviet Army accepts.

Accordingly, during his service every soldier goes through the same cycle of instruction four times.

Each of these lasts for five months, with one month as a break before the next one begins. During this interval, the soldiers who have completed their service are demobilized and the new intake arrives. In this month the recruits go through their Young Soldier's Course: the remainder overhaul and repair equipment and weapons, and do maintenance work at barracks, camps and firing-ranges. They are also used for various sorts of heavy work. This is not always for the Armed Forces; sometimes they become labourers on State projects. Then the five-month cycle of instruction begins. All the subjects in the training schedule are covered but during the first month the emphasis is on the individual training of each soldier. The youngest ones learn what they need to know and do, while the older ones repeat everything for the second, third or fourth time. As a soldier's service lengthens, the demands he must meet increase. A soldier who has only just joined may be required to do, for instance, 30 press-ups, one who has served for 6 months 40, after a year he will have to do 45 and after 18 months 50. The standards required increase similarly in every type of activity--shooting, running, driving military vehicles, resistance to CW materials, endurance without an air-supply in a tank under water, etc.

In the second month, while work continues on the improvement of individual skills, sections, crews and military teams are set up. In reality they exist already, since 75% of their members are soldiers who have already served in them for at least six months. The young recruits adapt quickly, for they are made to do the work for the whole team: the older members do not exert themselves but they squeeze enough sweat for ten out of the new arrivals so as to avoid being accused of idleness themselves and in order not to incur the wrath of their platoon or regimental commander.

From the second month, weapon training is no longer individual but to whole sections. Similarly, the sections, teams and other basic combat units receive all their tactical, technical and other instruction as groups. At the same time, members of these sections, teams and groups learn how to replace one another and how to stand in for their commanders. Sub-machine gunners practise firing machine-guns and grenade launchers, machine gunners learn to drive and service armoured personnel carriers, members of rocket launcher teams are taught how to carry out the duties of their section commander. Members of tank, gun, mortar and rocket-launcher crews receive similar instruction.

The third month is devoted to perfecting unit and in particular platoon cohesion. Exercises lasting for several days, field firing, river crossing, negotiation of obstacles, anti-gas and anti-radiation treatment of personnel and equipment--the soldiers carry all these out as platoons. During these exercises, section commanders receive practice in commanding a platoon in battle. Then come field firing and other practical exercises lasting for two weeks each, first at company, then at regimental and finally at divisional level. Two final weeks are taken up with large-scale manoeuvres, involving Armies, Fronts or even complete Strategic Directions.

After this an inspection of all the formations which make up the Soviet Army is carried out. Checks are carried out on individual soldiers, sergeants, officers, generals, sections, platoons, companies, batteries, battalions, regiments, brigades, divisions and Armies. With this the cycle of instruction is completed. A month is set aside for repair and refurbishing of equipment, firing-ranges, training grounds and training centres. In this month, again, the demobilization of time-expired soldiers and the reception of a new intake of recruits takes place. This is followed by a repetition of the entire training cycle--individual instruction and then the welding together of sections, platoons, companies, battalions, regiments, divisions, then the large-scale exercises and finally the inspection. So it goes on, over and over again.

Why does a soldier need to read a map?

1

Most Soviet soldiers do not know how to read a map. This is the absolute truth. They are just not taught to do so. What is more, there is no intention that they should learn, since it is not considered necessary.

In the West you can buy a map at any petrol station. In the USSR any map with more than a certain amount of detail on it is classified as a secret document. If you lose a single sheet of a map you can be put in prison for a long time--not a luxurious Western prison, but something quite different.

The fact that maps are regarded as secret gives the Soviet command a number of important advantages. In the event of a war on Soviet territory an enemy would have considerable difficulty in directing his artillery fire, or his aircraft, or in planning

operations in general. Thus, in 1941, the German command had to use pre-revolutionary maps, printed in 1897, to plan its air raids on Moscow. From time to time single Soviet maps fell into the hands of German troops, but this only occurred accidentally so the maps were unlikely to be consecutive sheets. When the Germans entered Soviet territory, it was noticeable that the accuracy of their artillery fire from covered fire positions fell off sharply. They were unable to use their V-1 and V-2 rockets.

By making the map a secret document the Communists achieved something else--attempting to flee from the Soviet paradise without a map is a fairly risky undertaking. On one occasion a Soviet soldier swam across the Elbe near Winterberg and asked for political asylum. When he was asked if he had any secrets to disclose he revealed that he had spent the last eighteen months painstakingly gathering every crumb of information he could lay his hands on. He was carefully questioned and was then sentenced to death and shot. He had swum the Elbe at the wrong point and had fallen into the hands of the East German frontier guards, who had questioned him, in broken Russian, at the request of their Soviet comrades. If he had swum across the Elbe a few kilometres further north he would have landed safely in West Germany--if, that is, he had avoided treading on mines or being torn to pieces by guard dogs.

2

In the Soviet Army there are, it is true, hundreds of thousands of soldiers who have been instructed in map-reading. But they are only those who would need to use a map in battle--reconnaissance and assault troops, SPETSNAZ diversionary troops, topographers, missile control operators, aircrew, artillerymen, etc.

An ordinary tank crew member or infantry soldier does not need a map. He does not take operational decisions, he obeys them. Remember Soviet tactical theory--no battalion, no regiment, division or Army advances independently. Even a Front can only operate independently in exceptional circumstances. A Soviet offensive is a massive avalanche of tanks, supported by a storm of artillery fire. All this is directed at a single, narrow sector of the enemy's front. Individual initiative could ruin the overall plan. In many cases, regimental and divisional commanders have no authority to deviate from the route they have been ordered to follow. In this situation an ordinary soldier does not need a map. His function is to keep his weapons and equipment in good order and to use them skilfully, to advance bravely and with determination in the direction indicated by his commander, and to push forward at all costs and whatever the losses. The Soviet soldier is not expected to pore over a map--there are any number of others who are doing that--but to refuel a tank quickly, to unload ammunition as fast as he can, to aim accurately and to fire cold-bloodedly. His task is to work as fast as he can, repairing damage to his personal weapons or changing rollers or tracks on tanks, putting out fires, driving his tank under water towards the enemy's shore. He must go without sleep for three days and without food for five, he must sleep in the snow in his shabby greatcoat and carry out the orders of his commander unquestioningly. The Soviet Army teaches him to do all this. But it only teaches map reading to those who will command and direct this soldier.

Those who built the Great Pyramids were probably not particularly well educated and often they probably did not even understand each other, since slaves had been driven together from distant areas to build the huge structures. But the pyramids turned out none the worse for that. The slaves were not expected to carry out intricate calculations or to make precise measurements: all that was required from them was obedience and diligence, submission to the lash and willingness to sacrifice themselves in order that some unknown but most desirable aim should be achieved.

Soviet generals adopt a similar position--surely it is not necessary to involve every slave in plans of such enormous complexity. Soviet generals are not arrogant; they are completely satisfied with a soldier who, even if he cannot read a map, does not strike, does not set up trades unions, does not pass judgement on the actions of his commanders and only gets his hair cut when a sergeant tells him to.

The Training of Sergeants

1

Soldiers are glad when their column reaches their new division and they are told that they are joining, for instance, the 207th Motor-Rifle Division, the 34th Guards Artillery or the 23rd Guards Tank Division. They know and are ready for what awaits them. But they are seriously alarmed if they discover that they are joining the 92nd Motor-Rifle Training Division, the 213th Motor-Rifle Training Division or the 66th Guards Motor-Rifle Training Division. The word 'Training' has an ominous sound to a recruit. True, it means that he will never be one of the scum, that he will never have senior soldiers above him, but, instead, he will become a sergeant in six months' time, standing above both scum and senior soldiers, as their lord and master. But he knows that for this he will have to pay a very heavy price--six months in a training division.

Formerly each regiment trained its own sergeants. In addition to its four or five battalions and its various companies, each regiment had a 'regimental school'. The regimental commander put his best company commander in charge of this school. If the last of an officer's postings contained the words 'commanded the regimental school' this showed that at one stage he was regarded as the best young officer in his regiment. The regimental commander devoted equal attention to his choice of platoon commanders from this school and he also sent the most ferocious of his sergeants there. Then each company commander would pick out the most promising of his recruits and would send them to the school. Their training would turn them into real wolf-hounds; they would return to their company with their sergeant's shoulder-boards and lead its soldiers to glory.

But the system of regimental schools had one shortcoming. Different nationalities have differing temperaments and their own traditions. Any Soviet officer will confirm that a Tatar makes the best sergeant of all. Ukrainians are very good sergeants. The Lithuanians are not bad. But the Russian, while he makes a good soldier or a good officer, is not a good sergeant. The great Russian people must forgive me, but this is not just my opinion: it is that of the majority of Soviet officers.

It may, of course, be that all Soviet officers are mistaken but, anyway, the regimental schools certainly accepted all the Tatars they were offered, immediately. They took the Ukrainians and the Lithuanians, too, but Georgians, Russians, Uzbeks and Azerbaidzhanis were given no places. Now, consider what happens when mobilization is ordered. All divisions, wherever they are permanently garrisoned, will call up their reservists and fill all their vacancies. Next second formation divisions--'invisible divisions' are formed. In the process, it comes to light that in the Tatar Republic all the reservists are sergeants and that there are no other ranks. The situation in the Ukraine and in Lithuania is almost the same. In the other republics though, all the reservists are private soldiers and there are no sergeants at all. While it is true that for instance, Georgians make excellent officers, they are not accepted for training as sergeants, because they are too warm-hearted and this makes them ready to overlook trifling mistakes. Trifling mistakes are precisely what a sergeant is

concerned with--he must never overlook them and he must punish those responsible without mercy. So, how could you ever build up a division in Georgia?

The General Staff racked its brains for a long time over this problem, but finally adopted the radical solution of disbanding all the regimental schools and of training sergeants centrally, in training divisions.

2

Naturally, the standard of sergeants and their authority dropped sharply as this decision was implemented. Whereas previously each company commander had picked out one of his recruits and told him, 'You are going to be a sergeant', now there was no such personal selection. One column of recruits was sent to a normal division, another went to a training division: it was done quite haphazardly. Against that, the General Staff now knows that, under the mobilization plans, Georgia, for instance, needs to produce 105,000 sergeants from its reserve but that in fact it has only 73,000. The remedy is obvious--in the near future the requisite number of new intake columns from Georgia must be sent to training divisions. All the General Staff needs to do is to work out what sort of sergeants it needs--rocket troops, artillery or infantry--and to issue the necessary instructions to local Military Commissars about the numbers they are to send to each training division.

Of course, in formulating these instructions, the General Staff does not forget to ensure that a suitable mixture of nationalities is retained in each division.

3

A training division has the same establishment, organisation and equipment as a normal motor-rifle division. Three of the most important battalions--the reconnaissance, communications and rocket battalions--are combat subunits which are identical with those in a normal division. All the other regiments and battalions of the division keep their weapons mothballed, holding additional weapons for training purposes. The training divisions have no fixed establishment of personnel: every six months each division receives ten thousand recruits to train. After five months of brutally tough training these trainees become sergeants and are sent to combat divisions, to replace those who have been demobilized. Then the training division receives another ten thousand and the cycle begins again. Thus each training division turns out twenty thousand sergeants a year.

Each trainee spends half of his first year at the training division, is promoted and then spends the remaining eighteen months of his service with a combat division.

Training divisions are located only on Soviet territory. If war should break out their current intake would be promoted ahead of time and they would call up their reserves, take their weapons out of storage and function as a combat divisions.

Each of the regiments of a training division trains sergeants in one particular field, following a specialised curriculum. The artillery regiment trains 1,500 artillery sergeants, the engineering battalion turns out 300 engineer sergeants with varying specialist qualifications, and so forth. A very large proportion of tank crew members pass through the training divisions, since the commander, gunner and driver of a tank are all NCOs: only the loader is a private soldier. Since the newest Soviet tanks carry no loaders, every member of a tank crew will henceforth pass through a training division. In the artillery the proportion of sergeants is much lower. In the infantry, units with armoured personnel carriers have one sergeant to each section, those with infantry combat vehicles have three sergeants to each section. The training of

sergeants in the various different fields proceeds in accordance with the requirements of the combat divisions.

In the tank training regiments, the first battalion usually trains tank commanders, the second, the gunners and the third, the drivers.

At the conclusion of their training all trainees sit examinations. If they pass them the specialists (gunners, tank drivers, radio operators etc.) become lance-corporals; those who pass with distinction become junior sergeants. Gun-, tank- and section-commanders become junior sergeants: those who pass with distinction receive immediate promotion to sergeant.

4

A training division has no scum or senior soldiers. All 10,000 recruits arrive and leave the division at the same time. The division does, however, have sergeants, and their influence is a hundred times greater than that of the sergeants in combat divisions. In a combat division, while a sergeant must not be over-familiar with his senior soldiers, he must at least respect them and take their opinions into account. In a training division, on the other hand, a sergeant simply dominates his trainees, totally ignoring any views they may have. In addition, each platoon commander in a training division, supervising thirty or forty young trainees, is allowed to retain the services of one or two of the toughest of them. A sergeant in a training division also knows that he would have nothing like the same authority in a combat division. While he is still a trainee, therefore, he picks noisy quarrels with his fellows, in the hope that his platoon commander will notice and decide that he is someone who should be kept on to join the staff after the end of the course. He cannot afford to reduce his aggressiveness if he succeeds in landing a job with the training division, or he may find himself sent off to join a combat division, having been replaced by some young terror who is only too ready to spend all his nights as well as his days enforcing order and discipline. (If, however, this should happen, he would soon realise that he is unlikely to be sent on anywhere else from a combat division and that he can therefore afford to let up a bit and to slacken the reins.)

Discipline in a training division is almost unbelievably strict. If you have not experienced life in one you could never imagine what it is like. For instance, you might have a section of non-smokers headed by a sergeant who does smoke. Every member of the section will carry cigarettes and matches in his pocket. If the sergeant, apparently without realising that he is doing so, lifts two fingers to his mouth, the section will assume that he is in need of a cigarette. As one, ten trainees will rush forward, pulling cigarette packets from their pockets. The sergeant hesitates, considering which of the ten stands highest in his favour at that moment, and finally selects one of the cigarettes he is offered. By doing so, he rewards a trainee for his recent performance. Ten packets of cigarettes disappear in a flash; in their place appear ten lighted matches, held out for the sergeant's use. Once again he pauses, looking thoughtfully from face to face--whom to reward this time? One match goes out, burning the fingers of a young trainee, who stoically endures the pain, even though it brings tears to his eyes. The sergeant accepts the light offered by the soldier next to him and puffs contentedly away.

Each day the sergeant picks one of the trainees and puts him in command of the others. The trainee must spend the day devising fresh torments for his fellows. If he really distinguishes himself by his inventiveness, he will receive the greatest honour of all--he will be allowed to polish the sergeant's boots that evening. The trainees fight a silent battle among themselves, every hour of every day, for this privilege.

Power depraves those who wield it and a sergeant in a training division is as depraved as it is possible to be. He uses his power to manipulate his subordinates, gradually turning them into real man-eaters.

Service in a training division is the pipe-dream of many Soviet officers. It is generally believed that in a training division one does no work at all. But this is not true: I know because I have served in one. The work is sheer drudgery. It is true that you never need to teach the trainees anything--their sergeants do that. It is true that every square metre of asphalt is scrubbed with toothbrushes. It is true that the floors in the lavatories shine almost as brightly as the sergeant's boots. It is true that no sergeant will ever step out of line, for fear of being posted to a combat division.

Against all this, however, the number of suicides in the training divisions must exceed the figures for any similarly-sized group of people anywhere else in the world. If a trainee in your platoon or your company kills himself, your own record of service will carry a black mark. And this black mark will never be erased. Each officer must therefore keep a constant watch on each of his trainees. As soon as he spots the slightest indication that something is wrong he must take action. He must pick out and give power to the trainee who appears to have reached the end of his tether and to be about to turn on his platoon, to blaze away at them, at his officers and at anyone else nearby and then, calmly changing the magazine, to send another long burst ripping through his own young body.

But how can you watch them all? Can you get to the right one in time to make him so drunk with power that he will resist the temptation to kill himself?

The Corrective System

1

Some say that before the Revolution the Russians were slaves in chains. Many believed this and many others still do so. Napoleon was one of these and he decided that he would conquer the country by winning over its down-trodden serfs. As he entered Russia, therefore, he published a manifesto, freeing the peasantry from serfdom. However, for whatever reason, the Russian peasants did not view him as a liberator and they ignored his edict. More than that, they rose against him, everywhere he or his armies appeared. Eventually they drove him from Russian soil, ignominiously abandoning his armies as he did so.

The Communists claim that they liberated the Russian people. Yet, when the war began, these same Russians greeted their foreign invaders with tears, with flowers and with enthusiastic hospitality. What can have brought them to the point at which they would greet even Hitler as their saviour and liberator?

The Soviet forces surrendered to Hitler in regiments, divisions, corps, and Armies. In September 1941 the 5th, 21st, 26th, and 37th Armies surrendered simultaneously and without resistance. In May 1942 the whole of the South-Western Front, the 6th, 9th and 57th Armies, the 2nd, 5th and 6th Cavalry Corps, the 21st and 23rd Tank Corps surrendered in the Kharkov area. They fought for four days and laid down their arms on the fifth. At the same moment, the 2nd Shock Army capitulated on the North-Western Front. What is more, they then turned their weapons against the Communists. Soldiers, officers, and generals of every nationality of the Soviet Union surrendered, although the Russians were the most numerous, both in numbers and as a percentage of the total Russian population of the country. The Russian Liberation Army was the largest of all the anti-Communist forces, drawn from the inhabitants of

the pre-revolutionary Russian Empire, which were set up during the Second World War. By the end of the war it consisted of approximately one million Russian soldiers and officers, who had chosen to fight against the Soviet Army. It could have been still larger than this, but Hitler would not give his wholehearted support to Lieutenant-General A. Vlasov, the leader of the Russian anti-Communist movement. With unbelievable short-sightedness, he embarked upon a bloodthirsty campaign of terror against the inhabitants of the territories occupied by his armies. Compared to the liberation and collectivisation campaigns carried out by the Communists, this terror was relatively mild, but it deprived Hitler of any hope of winning the laurels of a champion of freedom.

But the Communists were not idle. They did everything they could to retain power and to prevent the total collapse of the Soviet Army. On 13 May, 1942 the murderous 'Smersh' organisation--a military counter-intelligence service, operating independently of the NKVD--was established. Its most important task was defined by Beriya on 15 May as 'fighting attempts to revive a Russian Army'. That same day a new law on hostages was enacted, decreeing that the relatives of Soviet citizens who joined the Russian Liberation Army could be imprisoned for twenty-five years or shot. A day later new guidance on penal battalions was issued.

Penal battalions existed already but not in the form now envisaged. Nor had there ever been as many of them as was now proposed. Their final shape was decided upon in May 1942. The original proposals were confirmed and they have not changed from that day to this. Let us look at them more closely.

2

The old Russian Army had a good tradition: if its soldiers considered a war to be a just one they would fight like lions. If they believed it to be unjust and unnecessary for the Russian people, they would simply stick their bayonets in the ground and go home. That is what they did in 1917 and they did it again in 1941. Millions of Russian soldiers could see no reason to defend the Communist regime. Proof that this was a widespread attitude was provided by the Armies who gave themselves up. The same opinion was shared by hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, who established the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, by Cossacks, Georgians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Crimean Tatars and by many other peoples who, before the Revolution, had fought fearlessly for the interests of the Russian Empire against every foreign invasion.

The Communists are clever people. They saved their dictatorship in a most original way--by developing a new use for penal battalions, which proved to be a decisive force in the battles with the German army. The Germans choked on the blood of the Soviet penal battalions. Also, with the help of the penal battalions, the Communists destroyed millions of their potential and actual domestic enemies and put an end for several decades to the growth of disobedience and resistance to their regime.

Until May 1942, each Army fighting at the front had one penal battalion. These battalions were used in defence as well as during offensives. After this the situation altered--the battalions were only to be used, according to the new policy, in offensives. In defence they were to be employed only to counter-attack --and, after all, a counter-attack is itself an offensive action on a small scale. In addition to the battalions already serving with Armies, other battalions, subordinated to Fronts, were introduced. Each Front commander henceforth had between 10 and 15 penal battalions at his disposal.

Each battalion had an administrative group, a guard company and three penal companies. The permanent component of the battalion--the command staff and the guards--consisted of ordinary soldiers and officers who were selected for their

obtuseness, their ferocity and their fanaticism. They were rewarded with unheard-of privileges. The officers received seven times the normal pay--for each year of service they were given seven years towards their pension.

The penal battalions contained individuals who had shown reluctance to fight and others who were suspected of cowardice. With them were officers and soldiers who had been sentenced for various crimes and offences. The officer's who were sent to the battalions lost any decorations they had been awarded, together with their ranks, and joined the battalion as privates.

During periods of calm the penal battalions were kept in the rear. At the last moment before an offensive, they were brought up, under guard, and positioned at the forward edge of the battle area. As the artillery preparation began, the guard company, armed with machine guns, would take their place behind the penal companies, who were then issued with weapons. Then, on the command 'Advance to attack!' the guard company's machine guns would force the reluctant penal companies to get to their feet and to advance. Being unable to move in any other direction, they attacked, frenziedly. The most brilliant victories achieved by the Soviet Army were bought with the blood of the penal battalions. They were given the hardest and most thankless tasks. They would break through the enemy's defences and then, sweeping through their midst, trampling on their corpses, would come the elite Guards divisions. Thereafter no one wanted the penal companies in the area. It was far better to let the Guards do the fighting.

During the assault on the German defences at Stalingrad, 16 penal battalions were concentrated in the 21st Army's breakthrough sector and 23 more in the 65th Army's sector on the Don Front. Soviet Fronts employed almost as many as this during the Kursk battles, to breach the German defences. At one point in the course of the fighting in Byelorussia, on the orders of Marshal Zhukov, 34 penal battalions were brought together and thrown into the attack, to cut a way through for the 5th Guards Tank Army. 34 battalions are the equivalent of almost 4 divisions. One should add that very few of them survived the engagement and that, of course, those who were fortunate enough to live through this battle were almost certainly killed in the next one.

Each penal battalion had an establishment of 360. This may seem a small number. Yet the capacity of these battalions was astonishing. Soviet generals loved to attack or counter-attack: anyone under the command who seemed to lack fighting spirit would quickly find himself serving as a private in a penal battalion. An unsuccessful attack brought certain death for the members of the penal companies--they were unable to escape and they were shot down by the guard company. If they succeeded in advancing, the process would be repeated, again and again. They would die, eventually, when they came up against an impregnable defence. The guard company would then return to the rear, and assemble a new battalion, which would resume the attack on the following day--or even the same day.

The official figures given for Soviet casualties during the Second World War is 20,000,000 officers and men. In reality, of course, the total was considerably higher. A large proportion of these millions reached their destiny through the sausage machine of the penal battalions. Much stupidity and idiocy was displayed in the war, there were many unnecessary and unjustifiable sacrifices. But this was an exception: a subtle and carefully thought-out policy of using the blood of potential internal enemies to destroy an external enemy--the German military machine. It was at once a shrewd and appalling scheme.

The German command understood the situation very well. But their outlook was too limited and too pedantic to allow them to adopt the correct riposte--retreating rapidly before the penal battalions, giving the latter a chance to find cover from the heavy

machine guns, which threatened them from the rear, and to turn their weapons on the guard company. If Field Marshal von Paulus had done this at Stalingrad, the Soviet penal battalions would have cleared his path to the Volga. If von Manstein had done this at Kursk he would have won the greatest battle in tank history.

If... if... if only someone had realised how the Russians loathe Communism. If only someone had tried to tap this reserve of hatred.

3

In addition to the infantry penal battalions, which represented the majority, there were mine-clearing and air force penal units. The function of the mine-clearing units is self-explanatory but something more must be said about the air force penal companies. In addition to their bomb-loads and rockets the bombers and ground-attack aircraft carried cannon or machine guns in turrets for defence against enemy fighters. Why, reasoned our glorious Communist leaders, should honourable young Communists, devoted to the cause of liberating the working-class, die in our aircraft? Of course, our pilots must be trustworthy and dedicated (and there are hostages we can use to ensure that they remain so) but an air-gunner's duties could just as well be carried out by someone who is an enemy of socialism. And why shouldn't they be? He can't escape and he can't avoid fighting, since his own life depends on the outcome. By repelling enemy fighters he is first of all preserving his own worthless life, but he is also defending the aircraft, and with it the Communist cause.

From May 1942 onwards, penal companies of air-gunners were attached to all the bomber and ground-attack units of the Red Army. They were kept near the airfields, in stockades surrounded by barbed wire. Their training was rapidly completed. They were simply taught how to estimate the distance of an approaching enemy aircraft and how to fire their cannon or machine-guns. They were not given parachutes--they would not, in any case, have known how to use them. In order that no rash ideas should enter his head during a flight, the newly-fledged gunner was firmly strapped to his seat--as if for his own safety. The pilot in the IL-2 and IL-10 ground-attack aircraft was protected by armour-plating; behind him with his back to him, sat the gunner, who was protected only by his 12.7mm machine gun. Members of penal companies were also used as gunners on PE-2 and TU-2 dive-bombers and also on the PE-8 and other bombers.

In order to arouse the fighting spirit of these 'flying convicts', an incentive was devised--their sentences were reduced by a year for each operational flight. At that time their standard sentence was ten years. Ten flights and you'll be free! This device worked, even though the gunners had not volunteered for the job. Nevertheless, the fighting spirit among these prisoners, who were really under sentence of death, was considerably higher than it was among their fellow-sufferers on the ground.

Whoever thought of this idea was certainly no fool. In the first place not many of the gunners survived nine flights. Anyone who did manage to do so was never sent on a tenth flight. His companions were told that he had been sent to another regiment, nearby, or released, whereas in fact the poor devil had been sent to serve for a year with a mine-clearing battalion. The pretext used was a standard one--'your nerves are in a bad state. The medical officer won't allow you to fly any more.'

The average expectation of life in a mine-clearing battalion was, if anything, lower than that in the penal battalions which served with the infantry.

The death rate among the 'flying convicts' remained exceptionally high. This did not greatly concern anyone--this was their inevitable fate. Unfortunately though, when an air-gunner was killed, his machine-gun would slip from his hands and its barrel would drop lifelessly downwards. This was a useful signal to the German

fighters--the gunner in that aircraft has been killed, so the aircraft is defenceless. Let's get it!

The Soviet command finally realised, after questioning a number of German airmen who had been shot down, that, as he died, the air gunner was involuntarily signalling to the enemy that his aircraft was undefended. What could be done? You could not get two flying convicts into one cabin--and what would be the point, in any case, since the same burst of fire might kill both of them. Much thought was given to the problem. Then a brilliant idea occurred to Marshal of the Air Forces A. E. Golovanov, Stalin's former personal pilot and bodyguard, whose job it had been to arrest marshals and generals for his master and to conduct them to Moscow. He thought of the idea of fixing a spring to the breech of an aircraft's machine gun. Whether the gunner was alive or not, the barrel of the gun would now keep pointing upwards. For this invention Stalin rewarded this favourite of his with the Order of Lenin.

4

In peacetime the penal battalions are known as Independent Disciplinary Battalions. Each commander of a Military District is responsible for two or three of them. Commanders of Groups of Forces stationed outside the USSR also have battalions of this sort under their command, but they are stationed on Soviet territory.

The disciplinary battalions have been organised in precisely the same way as the wartime penal battalions--administration, a guard company and three penal companies. In peacetime the officers serving with these battalions are paid at double rates--for each year of service they receive two years' pay and two years towards their pension.

The soldiers and sergeants on the permanent staff of these battalions have been sent to them by military tribunals which have sentenced them to work there for periods of between three months and two years. Time spent in a disciplinary battalion does not count as part of a soldier's military service. In my division, on one occasion, two sergeants got drunk the day before they were to be demobilized after two years' service. In their drunken state they were insufficiently respectful towards one of the staff officers. A tribunal sentenced each of them to lose his rank and to serve for two years with a disciplinary battalion. After two years they returned to the division, completed their remaining day's service and were demobilized.

Life in a Soviet disciplinary battalion today is a large subject, which should be discussed at length and separately. I will limit myself to saying that such a battalion will break the strongest of characters within three months. I have never, during my entire service, met a soldier who had spent time in one who showed the slightest traces of disobedience or indiscipline. It is a great day for any commanding officer in the Soviet Army when his unit is re-joined by someone whom everyone has forgotten and whom very few will recognise--a man sent to a disciplinary battalion some time ago for insubordination, or indiscipline or for some form of protest. The officers in the regiment and the division have mostly changed since his day, as have the overwhelming majority of sergeants and other ranks. Suddenly, he appears--quiet, downtrodden, submissive. He talks to no one and carries out all orders or instructions uncomplainingly. It is impossible to get him to say a single word about where he has been or what he has seen. His answers are monosyllabic and expressionless--`Yes' and `No' seem to be the only words left in his vocabulary. Then suddenly one of the longer-serving soldiers remembers--this was Kol'ka, the trouble-maker, the wit, a live-wire, forever suggesting risky escapades, who sang and played the guitar and was adored by all the local girls. Eighteen months ago he was sent to a disciplinary battalion for some trifling offence. The younger soldiers, gazing at this silent, gloomy

new arrival, can only half-believe what they hear. The regiment quietens down, discipline improves, more respect is shown to its officers.

For minor offences a soldier does 3 to 15 days in the unit's guardroom. Any soldier who spends more than 45 days there in a year is automatically sent to a disciplinary battalion. There he is reformed: after he returns to his unit he will never again commit a disciplinary offence. He will never want to sit behind bars again.

Nevertheless, if war with the West should break out, Soviet soldiers would surrender by the million. Disciplinary or penal battalions would not prevent this from happening. And the Politburo has no illusions about this.

Part Eight

The Officer's Path

How to Control Them

1

I arrived at divisional headquarters early in the morning. The duty officer, a Lieutenant-Colonel, was welcoming. He had not slept all night and he might well have told me, peevishly, to go to hell. As it was, my brand-new lieutenant's shoulder-boards seemed to strike a chord in his memory, and he just smiled to himself and said, 'Go out and take a walk for half an hour or so. It's still a bit early.'

Half an hour later I returned to divisional HQ and was taken straight to the office of the head of the personnel department. He, too, was pleasantly welcoming. He had been sent my personal file a month earlier. After I had finished my training, I had taken my first leave as an officer, like all my companions from the military training college, but my file was already lying in front of this personnel officer, on that table, and at night it had been put in that safe over there. Probably he knew me better than I knew myself. He took a long look at me and then asked one question, which I had, of course, been expecting:

'How about changing to First Specialisation?'

Each military trade is referred to by a number. Before the war there were about 150 of them. Nowadays there are more than 1,000. But all-arms commanders are all First Specialisation men--and they are the ones who ensure that all the different arms of service and Armed Services work together properly. Those who command motor-rifle platoons, companies, battalions, regiments, divisions and all-arms Armies, Fronts and Strategic Directions are all First Specialisation officers. The Supreme Commander, too, has the same background. I am a tank officer and I love tanks, but now they are offering me an infantry job--one which is more difficult, but which has better prospects. The cushy jobs are always full, but there is a constant and acute shortage of officers in the infantry. Platoons are commanded by sergeants, because there are not enough lieutenants. In the infantry, one's chances of promotion are very good, but they are never able to find enough people who are prepared to put up with the hardships of infantry life. So they often ask officers with other specialisations--officers with tank, anti-tank and mortar training--this question.

'I am in no hurry. You've got time to think it over--and it is something you need to think about.' Nevertheless, the personnel officer looks at me expectantly. I do not usually take long to make up my mind. I stand up and say, decisively, 'I wish to transfer to First Specialisation.'

He likes my reaction, perhaps not because he has succeeded so easily in getting me to volunteer for such a hellish job, but simply because he respects a positive attitude.

`Have you been able to have any breakfast yet?'--his tone alters.

`Not yet.'

`There's quite a good cafe opposite Divisional HQ. Why don't you look in there? Meet me there at 10 o'clock and I'll take you to the divisional commander. I'll recommend you for a company straight away. I knew you would accept. In the divisional tank regiment you would only get a platoon and you'd have to do three years there before there was any prospect of promotion.'

2

The order appointing me commander of the 4th motor-rifle company of the Guards motor-rifle regiment was signed at 10.03 hours. Already by 10.30 I was at regimental headquarters. The regimental commander looked disapprovingly at my tank badges. I could see him thinking--a lot of you crooks wangle yourselves jobs in the infantry to see what you can get out of it. He asked me some standard questions and then told me I could take over the company.

The 4th Company had already been without a commander for three months. Instead of five officers it had only one, a lieutenant who was in command of the first platoon. He had graduated from his military training college the previous year, had commanded a platoon for six months and had been given command of the company. But then he had taken to drinking heavily and had been returned to his platoon. Equipment? The company had none. In the event of mobilization a regiment would receive agricultural lorries to do the job of armoured personnel carriers, but in peacetime the regimental commander has a number of APCs at his disposal, and these are used for the combat training of individual companies and battalions.

There were 58 NCOs and other ranks in the company, instead of the full complement of 101--the division was being kept below strength. Most of the company spoke Russian. Discipline was poor. Demobilization was approaching--an order would be coming from the Minister immediately after the inspection. In anticipation of this, the oldest soldiers had become slack, putting pressure on the scum, not to make them work hard but to get them to fetch vodka. There were 19 of these senior soldiers in the company. Their sergeants found them almost uncontrollable. The inspection was to begin in four days' time.

3

At a meeting that evening the regimental commander presented me to his hundred or so officers, who looked at me without particular interest. I clicked my heels and made a small bow.

The only subject discussed at the meeting was the forthcoming inspection. `And just in case the idea should occur to anyone--there is to be no cheating--better the truth, however unpleasant, than some elaborate cover-up. If I hear of any attempt to deceive the commission, to try to make things look better than they are, the officer concerned will lose his job and will be put under immediate arrest!' I liked this straightforward approach. That was the proper way to do things. It was quite wrong to sweep things under the carpet. The other officers nodded in agreement. The regimental commander finished his address and looked towards his chief of staff, who smiled jocularly. `Company commanders 20 rubles each, deputy battalion commanders 25, battalion commanders 30 and the rest know what they should give. Give your donation to the finance officer. I want to emphasise once again, that this is entirely voluntary. It's just a matter of hospitality.' The pile of money in front of the finance officer grew steadily. I did not ask why we were handing over this money. The

Soviet Army has not only got more divisions and tanks, more soldiers and generals, than any other army in the world. It also has more pigs. Under the Socialist system of equitable distribution, more is collected from the industrious than from the idle and the peasants are given no incentive to work hard: any surplus they produce is just taken away from them. This means that the agricultural sector is unable to supply enough food for either the army or the defence industries. Because of this, each regiment has to keep pigs. No money is allocated for this purpose. The pigs are fed on left-overs from the kitchens. There are thousands of regiments in the Soviet Army: each of them has a hundred pigs. How could any army on earth have so many pigs?

In theory, the pigs are kept so that the diet of the soldiers can be improved. In practice they are all destined to feed the commissions which come to inspect the regiment. Some of their meat is made into excellent chops, gammon steaks and so forth. The remainder is sold, and the proceeds are used to buy caviare, fish, ham and other delicacies, all of which, with the meat, is for consumption by the commissions. And their vodka is bought with money from regimental funds, together with the 'voluntary' donations provided by the officers.

4

Commissions are made up of staff officers from other military districts. For instance, this year, officers from the Baltic Military District may inspect the divisions in the Far Eastern and Turkestan Military Districts, while others from the Sub-Carpathian Military District will inspect those in the Moscow, Volga and Baltic Military Districts.

Staff officers are idealists, theoreticians who are remote from real life. They have forgotten, or perhaps have never known, the cost of human sweat. They expect soldiers to be able to answer questions about the principles of modern warfare, forgetting that some of them have never even heard the Russian language until they entered the army. They expect soldiers to be able to do fifty press-ups, unconcerned that some of them come from families that have suffered for generations from undernourishment. It may have taken me two years to teach someone from this sort of background to do ten press-ups and both he and I may be proud of what we have achieved. But this would not satisfy a staff officer. Staff officers are used to moving armies across maps, like pawns on a chessboard, forgetting that a soldier may disobey an order, he may suddenly go mad, he may rebel against authority, oppose his superiors, or perhaps, driven to desperation, he may kill his unit commander. Do staff officers realise this? Like hell they do. And this is why they have to be entertained over and over again. A glass of vodka and another and another? A little pork? Some caviare? A helping of mushrooms and a little more vodka?

However, as I handed over my money for the vodka, it did not occur to me that a regimental commander needs to create a general atmosphere of friendliness and hospitality for the commission, I forgot about the bitter competition between company and battalion commanders, I completely overlooked the fact that the commission is not allowed to give everyone good marks and that, if one company succeeds by its welcome and hospitality in achieving an 'Excellent' rating, another will have to suffer, because the commission is compelled to mark someone 'Unsatisfactory'.

I assumed that the regimental commander's warning against fraudulence was sincere. It did not occur to me that, if what was really going on became known, the commander himself would be dismissed immediately. At the same time, he could hardly advocate the use of deceit--he could be thrown into gaol for that. So what else could he have said?

Anyway the inspection began. I presented the company exactly as it was. But, all around us, miracles were being performed. The results achieved by the other

companies were quite astonishing. In the 5th Company, for instance, they tested the drivers of armoured personnel carriers. The latter's knowledge of their vehicles was entirely theoretical. Yet all ten drivers were given 'excellent' gradings for their performance in driving an APC over rough ground. It was only several months later that I discovered that the company commander had used up all the petrol allocated to him in training just two, not ten, of his drivers. During the test, the drivers took their places one after another in the APC and each one, as he got in, would close the hatch. Then one of the two experts who was already in the vehicle, would take the wheel and race the vehicle round the course.

All the soldiers in the 1st Company were graded 'excellent' for their shooting. Their performance seemed too good to be true, but the members of the commission, who were quite sober at the time, had examined the target after each soldier had fired his rounds and had marked every bullet-hole with paint. Quite by chance, I discovered that the best shot in the company had been lying in some nearby bushes with a sniper's rifle, fitted with a silencer. He had helped his comrades out. Everyone was doing much the same sort of thing. Then there was the boozing. First the commission was entertained at regimental level and then came the turns of individual battalions and companies. No preparation at all had been made in my company. As a result, the marks which we were awarded turned out to be catastrophic. Each time I paraded the men after the inspection I would hear someone behind me mutter angrily, through his clenched teeth, 'Scum!' He was, of course, addressing me.

Each officer is responsible for the unit under his command from the very moment he takes it over. He is answerable for everything, even if he has only arrived four days--or three hours--earlier.

My company got the worst marks in the whole regiment. It did not matter that the next worst did not get many more--a wide rift appeared between us and all the other companies. The officers laughed at me, openly, and on the doors of the company's barrack-room there appeared the inscription 'SUC = Suvorov's Uncontrolled Company'.

I reacted to all this mockery with a cheerful smile. Meanwhile, the companies which had taken between third and eighth places in the inspection were being put through 'training' sessions by their officers. Ostensibly in order to correct the mistakes for which they had been marked down, they were taken off into open country and punished in the most brutal fashion, being made to run in gas masks and rubber protective clothing until they collapsed, unconscious. My company waited, mutely, for me to do the same. I did not delay. I drew up a training programme and had it approved by the regimental staff. I asked for the use of five armoured personnel carriers and for the help of a tank platoon, since my company had told me that they had had no instruction in working with tanks in action. Besides the tanks I applied for three blank rounds for the tanks' guns.

I took my company out to a training area and carried out ordinary training exercises with them. I explained anything they did not understand and then put them through their paces, but did not punish them in any way. Next I paraded them and called the oldest group of soldiers forward. 'You have done your duty honourably,' I said to them, 'and you have followed a hard road. Today you have come to its end. Your last day of training in the Soviet Army is over. I thank you for all you have done. I cannot reward you in any way. Instead, allow me to shake you by the hand.'

I went up to each man and shook him firmly by the hand. Next I went back to the centre of the parade and bowed stiffly to them--something which, according to the regulations, should only be done in front of a group of officers. Then, at my signal, the three tanks suddenly shattered the quiet of the autumn woods by firing the blank

rounds, one after the other. This was so unexpected that it made the young soldiers flinch.

'The Army salutes you. Thank you.' I turned to the sergeant-major and told him to march the company back to the barracks.

Some days after this, late one evening, dozens of rockets suddenly soared skywards over the camp, thunderflashes and practice grenades exploded and bonfires were lit. The demobilization order, signed by the Minister of Defence, had arrived. It had been expected for some days but it always arrives without warning. As soon as they hear about it, those who are to be demobilized treat themselves to a firework display. For several days before the order every regiment has a team searching for illegally held rockets, training grenades and anything which could be used for a bonfire. They find and confiscate a lot but they cannot discover everything, for each soldier has been carefully gathering and hiding materials which he can use for the 'ceremonial salute'.

At the moment when the sky was suddenly lit up by blazing bonfires we, the officers, were in the middle of a Party meeting.

'Go and stop that!' the regimental commander snapped. The company commanders leapt to their feet and ran off to stop the row which their unruly charges were making.

The only people left in the room were the regimental doctor, the finance officer, some technical and staff officers who had no soldiers under their direct command, and me. I stood quietly watching what was going on outside the window. The regimental commander looked at me in astonishment.

'The 4th Company are not involved,' I said, in answer to his unspoken question.

'Is that so?' he said, with some surprise and sent one of the other officers to check my claim.

It was indeed true that nothing was happening in the 4th Company. My tank salute had been a great deal more impressive than a few rockets and thunderflashes. The appreciation which I had shown had flattered the senior soldiers and had given them prestige and self-respect. While the barrack-rooms of all the other companies were being searched for anything which could be detonated or burned, they came to me to hand over a kit-bag full of odds and ends which they had collected and promised that they would not take part in the celebrations.

When the meeting was resumed, the regimental commander rebuked the other company commanders for their failure to prevent the outburst. Then he asked me to stand up and he commended me for the way I controlled my men and made them behave as I wanted. It was never his way to ask officers how they achieved results. However, his chief of staff could not restrain himself and he asked me to tell them how I had handled the senior soldiers in my company, so that everyone could learn from my example.

'Comrade Lieutenant-Colonel--I gave my orders and they were obeyed.' From the outburst of good-natured laughter with which this was greeted, I knew that I had been accepted as an equal by the regiment's officers.

5

A Soviet officer is someone who has no rights whatsoever.

In theory, he knows, he must encourage those who are diligent and careful; he must punish the idle and the undisciplined. But the dictatorship of the proletariat has produced a state in which authority is too centralised to permit him to use either a stick or a carrot. He is allowed neither. He is not entitled either to punish or to reward.

On Sundays, the commander of a sub-unit is allowed to send 10% of his NCOs and soldiers into town during daylight hours. This might seem to be a way of encouraging those who deserve it. In fact, however, although he may make a soldier a present of eight hours in this way, he cannot be sure that his battalion or regimental commander will not overrule him by stopping all leave. Besides, platoon and company commanders themselves are not enthusiastic about letting soldiers out of camp. If a soldier is checked by a patrol in the town and they find the slightest thing wrong, the officer who allowed the soldier to leave his barracks is held responsible. A commander, therefore, prefers to send soldiers off for the day in a group, under the eye of the political officer. This is the only way in which Soviet soldiers are allowed to go into a town in Eastern Europe and it is very frequently used in the Soviet Union, too. Since a Soviet soldier does not like being part of a convoy, he just does not bother to leave camp.

A company commander may hold a soldier under arrest for three days, but a platoon commander is not allowed to do so. However, by giving the company commander this right, the Soviet authorities have him by the throat; when the state of discipline in a unit is being assessed, the number of punishments is taken into account. For instance, arrests might average 15 in one company each month, but 45 in another. Clearly, say the powers that be, the first company must be the better one. Three soldiers might be punished in the first company and ten in the second. Again, this is a clear indication that the first company is in better shape. This attitude on the part of the authorities forces unit commanders to hush up or ignore disciplinary offences and even crimes, in order not to drop behind their competitors. As a soldier comes to understand the system, he begins to break the rules more and more frequently and ingeniously, confident that he will not be punished. Many attempts have been made to establish different criteria for assessing the state of discipline, but nothing has come of them. So long as the present system lasts, a commander will avoid handing out punishments, even when they are really called for.

Deprived of the right to punish or reward, an officer devises and imposes his own system. Thus, in one company, the soldiers will know that, if anything goes wrong, their night exercises will always be held when it is raining and will drag on for a long time. In another, they will know that they will have to spend a lot of time digging trenches in rocky ground.

Every commander gradually refines his system and he may eventually manage to avoid arrests and officially recognised punishments completely: he comes to be obeyed, without having to resort to them.

6

As well as denying the officer any legal method of controlling his charges, the system also forces him to develop his own methods of instructing them. Nor is he given any proper guidance in ways of ensuring the obedience of the men for whom he is responsible. Those who understand how to exercise power in the USSR guard their knowledge jealously: they certainly do not write textbooks on the subject. This is done for them by professors, who have never set eyes on a soldier in their lives. These professors have no power themselves--they may understand how it is acquired and retained, but their knowledge is entirely theoretical.

Nor will a young officer's colleagues pass on their experience on to him, for it has cost them too much to be handed out free. Anything which he learns at his military training college about relationships with his subordinates is the product of a professor's imagination and is of no practical value.

Once he graduates from his training college, the young officer suddenly finds himself in the position of a lion-tamer in a cage of lions, except that he knows no more about lions than that they belong to the cat family. Thereafter, the system of natural selection comes into operation--if you understand how to control your troops you will be accepted by the system; if not you will be relegated to the humblest of roles.

You learn the techniques of control from your own mistakes--and, unless you are a fool, from the mistakes of others. For there will be mistakes in plenty to be seen everywhere around you.

As an example, for several years the commander of the guard company of the 5th Army Staff punished any form of disobedience without mercy. His company was considered one of the best in the whole, huge Far Eastern Military District. His excellent record was noted and he was nominated for a place at an Academy, which would enable him to develop and to get ahead. With only a month left in command of the company, he found it impossible to retain his tight hold--his thoughts were centring more and more on the Academy. He changed his way of exercising command. One evening he invited all his sergeants to his office and gave them a tremendous party. The night turned out to be an unpleasant one for him--the sergeants, having had a lot to drink, nailed him to his office floor. The unfortunate man obviously had a poor knowledge of history; he had not grasped the simple fact that a revolution does not occur during a period of terror, but at the moment when that terror is suddenly relaxed. Historically, the examples of the French Revolution and of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 illustrate this principle; it will continue to operate.

A tough commander may take a disobedient soldier into the company office and beat him unmercifully. The soldier writhes on the floor for a while but then he gets to his feet, seizes a lamp from the table and hurls it in the officer's face. The soldier will be court-martialled but the officer will never again be able to control his company; the soldiers will laugh at him behind his back.

A young officer in front of his soldiers says to them, 'If you get good marks at the inspection I promise you I'll...' As an outside observer, you will see scepticism on the faces of the soldiers. You realise that the young Lieutenant is revealing one of his weaknesses, his desire to succeed. You can't always be kind to everyone, Lieutenant, and henceforth anyone whom you treat roughly will use this weakness against you. Everyone has a failing of some sort, but why let others realise it? They may prove to be anything but sympathetic. Just look at this scene and always try to remember the golden rule of controlling others--NEVER PROMISE ANYONE ANYTHING!

If you are able to do something for another person--do it, without having made any promises. From this first rule there follows a second--NEVER THREATEN ANYONE!

You can punish someone and, if you consider it necessary, you should do so. But promises and threats simply weaken your authority as a commander.

After some time you will come to understand the most important rules of all, one which you have never been taught--RESPECT YOUR SOLDIERS.

If a commander is invited by his soldiers to sit at their table, and if he accepts with the gratitude with which he would accept an invitation from his colonel, he is never likely to suffer at their hands. He can be sure that these soldiers will defend him in battle, even if it should cost them their lives. If a commander has learned to respect his soldiers (which means more than just showing them respect), he will suddenly realise, with some surprise, that he no longer needs informers in their ranks. His men will come forward of their own accord, tell him what is going on and ask for his help or protection.

A commander who respects a soldier can ask anything of him and can be confident that the soldier will carry out all his requests without pressure of any sort.

How Much Do You Drink In Your Spare Time?

1

The regimental parade takes place every day at 0800 hours. All the officers of the regiment must attend. Some of them will already have supervised reveille and morning PT, so they will have had to have arrived at the barracks before 0600. If it takes them an hour to get to the unit, they will have had to get up very early indeed. From 0800 to 1500 hours all officers take part in the training programmes. If you are a platoon commander you work with your platoon. If you are a company commander, you may work with your company sergeants or with one of the platoons--perhaps one of the platoon commanders is on leave, or perhaps you have no platoon commanders in your company. Battalion commanders, their deputies and battalion chiefs of staff, either work with platoons which have no commanders or check the training being carried out by platoon or company commanders. Checking training is a good deal easier than being checked yourself.

Officers have lunch between 1500 and 1600 hours. From 1600 until the late evening they are involved in officers' meetings or Party meetings, or they attend Komsomol meetings held in platoons, companies or battalions. During this period, after their lunch, officers also receive their own training--they pore over secret orders, they are shown classified films, and so forth. Meanwhile, the cleaning of weapons and combat equipment is being carried out in sub-units and, although this is supervised by sergeants, the officers are responsible for the condition of the equipment, and they therefore need to take a few minutes to keep an eye on what is going on. Finally, the officer will have to give seven hours of instruction next day and he must prepare for this. The colonel comes over from divisional headquarters to see what preparations we are making. He states that the preparation for a two-hour training period must include a trip out to the training area, the selection of a good spot for the work which is to be done there and briefing for the sergeants on the way the training is to be carried out. Thereafter, sub-unit commanders are to return to the camp and to work with their sergeants, studying manuals, regulations and recommendations. Next, they are to draw up plans listing the exercises which are to be carried out, to have these approved by their immediate superiors and targets, simulators, combat to prepare everything which will be needed--equipment, etc.

From what the colonel says, it appears that the preparations for a two-hour exercise should take at least five hours. We express agreement, of course, but to ourselves we think, 'You can get stuffed, Colonel. I give seven hours' instruction a day. If I prepare for it in the way you are suggesting, I shan't even have time to go to the lavatory. No, my dear Colonel, I'm not going to spend five hours preparing this exercise. I'll spend five minutes.' As quickly as I can, I write out the plan for the exercise and explain to my deputy how he must prepare for it. Everything will sort itself out tomorrow. If time is really pressing, during the Party meeting I get hold of the plans I prepared for last year's exercise and carefully alter the date. That means we can use last year's plan over again.

In the late evening comes the second regimental parade and by 2200 hours the officers who are not involved in night exercises have finished for the day.

What shall I do now? I am unmarried, of course. Anyone idiotic enough to get married while he is a lieutenant soon regrets it bitterly. He and his wife never see each other. The regiment has no married accommodation for junior officers and the

relationship is doomed to failure. Any sort of private life is severely discouraged under Socialism, as a potential source of discontent and disunity. The resources available to the Armed Services are used to build tanks, not to put up married quarters for lieutenants. I realised this a long time ago and this was why I have not got married.

So, what shall I do with my spare time? The library is already closed, of course, and so is the cinema. I have no interest in going to the gymnasium--I have been rushing about so much today that I feel utterly exhausted. I'll just go back to the officers' quarters, where all the young bachelors live. There is a television set there but I already know that the whole of today's programme is about Lenin. Yesterday it was about the dangers of abortion and the excellence of the harvest, tomorrow it will be about Brezhnev and the harvest or Ustinov and abortion.

As I enter the living room, I am greeted with delighted cries. Around the table sit fifteen or so officers. They have just begun a game of cards and thick clouds of cigarette smoke hang over them already. I got no sleep last night so I decide to play just one round and then go to bed. A place is made for me at the table and a large glass of vodka put down beside me. I drink it, smiling at my companions, and push a large sum of money over to the bank. Here we go.

Some time after one o'clock, officers returning from night exercises burst noisily into the room, dirty, wet and worn out. They are found places at the table and someone brings them glasses of vodka. They got no sleep last night and decide to go to bed after just one round.

I lose money fast. This is a good sign--unlucky at cards, lucky in love. I assure the sceptics around me that losing is really a sign of good fortune.

Three hours later, the commander of a neighbouring company appears, having just inspected the night guard. He is greeted with delighted cries. Someone produces a full glass of vodka for him. We have already got through a good deal and we have begun to drink only half a glass at a time. The new arrival got no sleep last night, so he decides to leave after one round. The money flows quickly from his pockets--this is not a bad sign. At least anyone who loses money is not hiding it in his pockets. By tradition the loser buys drinks for everyone else. He does so. We decide to play one more round. A good sign... we've drunk all that... someone is coming... they're pouring out more drinks... another round... a good sign...

At six o'clock the clear notes of a bugle float out over the regiment--reveille for the soldiers. When we hear it we all get up, throw our cards on the table and go off to bed.

At 0700 hours a soldier, designated by me as the best in my company, has to wake me up. This is no easy task, but he manages it. I sit on my bed and gaze at the portrait of Lenin which hangs on the wall. What would our great Teacher and Leader say if he could see me in this state, my face puffy with drink and lack of sleep? My boots have been carefully cleaned, my trousers pressed. This is not part of the soldier's duties, but evidently the senior soldiers have given him orders of their own. They must like me, after all!

The doors and windows swim before my eyes. Here comes the door floating past. It is essential not to miss this and to choose the right moment to run through it, as it passes. Someone helpfully pushes me in the right direction. Along the corridor there are ten doors and they are all swimming past me. I must find the right one. Somehow I manage it and I step under the freezing, searingly cold shower. Then comes breakfast and by 0800 hours, glowing and rejuvenated, I am present at the regimental parade, in front of my Guards company. Hell, I've forgotten my map case, which has got the day's programme in it! But some one helpfully hangs it over my shoulder and the working day begins.

The Communist Party hopes that an unconquerable soldier can be produced--one who is more dedicated to Leninism than Lenin himself, who is an athlete of Olympic standards, who knows his tank, his gun or his armoured personnel carrier at least as well as its designer. But, for whatever reason this is not how things work out, so the Party comrades call for a detailed training programme for soldiers and NCOs to be prepared. This is presented to the Central Committee, but it does not produce better soldiers. Clearly, the junior commanders are not fulfilling their norms. Check up on them!

And check on us they do, each day and every day. Everything is checked and tested--by the staffs of the battalions, regiments. Armies and Military Districts, by the General Staff and by a whole mass of committees which it has set up, by the Inspectorate of the Soviet Army, by the Directorate of Combat Training of the Soviet Army, by similar directorates within Military Districts, Armies and divisions and by the Strategic Camouflage Directorate. In addition, tank crews are checked and tested by their own commanders, artillery personnel by theirs and so on. The first question any commanding officer is asked is--have you had experience of working with the infantry? If he has, he is sent off to test them, and then they come back to test his sub-unit.

Hardly a day passes without two or three checks. Every commission which arrives to carry out a check has its own pet subject. Can your men get into an APC in ten seconds and out again in the same time? Of course they can't, I reply.

That's bad, Lieutenant. Haven't you studied the plan? We'll make a note of that. Cursing, I take the one APC I have been allocated off to a clearing in the woods and make my first platoon climb in and out of it again and again as the plan requires. But soon another commission appears and wants to know whether my men can reach the standards laid down for high-speed crosscountry driving across broken terrain. No, I say, they can't. Well, Lieutenant, that's very bad. The assessors record this unsatisfactory finding and order me to begin training my drivers immediately, using the APC. I salute and recall the platoon which has been practising getting in and out of the APC, but I don't send the vehicle for driver-training. I'll keep the damned thing here with me, I decide. A new commission appears and asks their pet questions. How is your platoon getting on with firing automatic weapons from an APC? Not too well, I reply, but we are practising day and night. Here is the APC, there is the platoon and those are the machine-gun crews. The members of the commission smile and move on.

Two failures in one day. But no one is interested in the fact that I haven't got enough APCs. Even if I had, fuel would be short or there wouldn't be enough grenades or grenade launchers.

Two failures in one day--two failures to reach the norms prescribed in the programme for the training of NCOs and other ranks which has been approved by the Central Committee of the Communist Party!

I get back to my quarters late that evening, wet, dirty, tired and angry. I have had to do two night exercises, with two different platoons, straight off--two more teams have checked our performance and we've been awarded two more bad marks.

People make a place for me. Someone gives me a tumbler of vodka and tries to cheer me up--don't take it too seriously! I drink the vodka, but it is some time before it takes effect. So I have another. Now I'll play just one round of cards. But my anger does not evaporate. They pour me another drink. Another round of cards. A sure sign... Someone bursts through the door... they pour him a drink... they pour me a

drink... another round... a good sign... At 0600 hours the bugle rouses us from the table. On it there are piles of cigarette ends, underneath it is a heap of bottles.

3

Gradually one gets used to checks and tests. One finds ways of dealing with the searching questions. I come gradually to the conclusion that it is quite impossible for me to meet the requirements of the training plan--for me or for anyone else. Its demands are too high and the training facilities are quite inadequate. Besides, the plan robs an officer of any initiative. I'm not allowed to give the company physical training if the plan shows that this is the period for technical training. During technical training I cannot show them how to replace the engine of a vehicle if, according to the plan, I should be teaching them its working principles. But I can't explain an engine's working principles because the soldiers don't understand Russian sufficiently well, so I am unable to do either one thing or the other. Meanwhile, the commissions keep arriving. In the evenings my friends tell me not to get upset. I do the same whenever I see signs that one of them is approaching breaking point. I hurry over and pour him a drink. I sit him next to me at table and thrust cards into his hand. Here, have a cigarette. Don't take it so hard...

After a few more months, I realise that it is essential for me to go through the motions of meeting the plan's requirements. However, I do not give all the drivers a chance at the wheel: instead I allow two or three of the best of them to use all the driving time which we are allocated. All the anti-tank rockets which we receive go to the three who perform best with the launchers; the other six will have to get by with theoretical training.

When a commission arrives, I tell them confidently that we are making progress in the right direction. Look at those drivers--they are my record-breakers--the champions of the company! The rest are coming along quite well, but they are still young and inexperienced. Still, we know how to bring them on. The commission is happy with this. And those are the rocket launchers. They could hit an apple with their anti-tank rockets (if you'd care to stand your son over there with an apple on his head). They are crack shots, the stars of our team! We'll soon have the others up to their standard, too. And these are our machine-gunners--three of them are quite superb! And this man is a marksman! And that section can get into an APC in seven seconds flat--which is faster than the official record for the Military District! How can the commission know that jumping into an APC is all that the section ever does, and that they have never been taught to do anything else?

People begin to notice me. They praise me. Then I am promoted to the staff. Now I walk about with a notebook, drawling comments--*NOT* very good! Have you not studied the Plan which the Party has approved? Occasionally I say--Not *TOO* bad. I know perfectly well that what I am seeing has been faked, that this is a handpicked team--and I also know the cost at which such results are achieved. But still I say Not *TOO* bad. Then I move off to the officers mess so that they can ply me with food and drink.

The difference between the work of a staff officer and that of a sub-unit commander is that on the staff you have no responsibility. You also get a chance to drink but don't have to drink too much. All you do is walk about giving some people good marks and others bad ones. And you eat better as a staff officer. Those pigs are meant for visiting commissions, after all--in other words, for us staff officers.

Drop in, And We'll Have a Chat

1

The triangle of power represented by the Party, Army and KGB brings pressure to bear on every officer and, what is more, it does so with each of its corners simultaneously. I am conscious of three separate weights pressing down on me at the same time; the forces they exert are different and push in different directions. To accept the pressure of all three at once is impossible and if you are not careful you can find yourself caught and crushed between two of them.

To me, as a platoon or company commander, the power of the Army is personified by my battalion commander, by the commander of my regiment or division, by the Commander of the Army or Military District in which I find myself, by the Minister of Defence and by the Supreme Commander. As I advance in my career as an officer, there will always be enough gradations of authority above me for me to feel the weight of some superior's boots on my shoulders.

The Party, too, keeps an eye on each officer, NCO and other rank. Every company commander has a deputy who heads the political section. This deputy has equivalents at battalion and regimental level and each successive higher level. A political officer is not really an officer at all. He wears uniform and has stars on his shoulders, but the extent of his success or failure is not dependent upon the judgements of military commanders. He is a man of the Party. The Party appointed him to his post and can promote and dismiss him: he is accountable only to it. The company 'politrabochiy', as he is known, is subordinated to the battalion 'politrabochiy' who is himself answerable to his regimental equivalent and so forth, right up to the Chief Political Directorate itself. This Directorate is in some senses a part of the Armed Services; at the same time, however, it is a full Department of the Central Committee of the Party.

The KGB, too, is active in every regiment. That inconspicuous senior lieutenant over there, the one whom our colonel has just acknowledged with a bow, represents a special department, and he controls a secret KGB network, which is at work in our regiment and also in its immediate surroundings.

2

The three forces push me in different directions, threatening to tear me apart. To manoeuvre between them is very difficult. Each of the three tries incessantly to control my very thoughts and to exclude the influence of its rivals.

The army is glad that I am a bachelor. It would be ideal if all officers were a species of crusading monks, content to live in a citadel which we would never leave, unless the State required us to do so. The divisional commander calls one of my platoon commanders forward and addresses him clearly and distinctly, so that everyone can hear. 'I made a vow that I would defend our Motherland. Therefore I will defend you and I expect you to do the same for me. But I made no such vow to your wife, and so I cannot allow you to spend the night at home. You are an officer and you must be operationally available at any moment. Telephone your wife and tell her that, although she has not seen you for two months, she should not expect to do so for as long again. You can add that the situation in the Navy is even worse than in the Army!'

However, my situation does not please the Party at all. The political officer summons me and we have a long talk. 'The country's birth-rate is catastrophically low. Even under the Mongols our population remained stable, but that is not the case today, under Communism. Viktor, you are a Communist. You should fulfil your duty to

the Party.' I nod in agreement and ask, naively, 'But will you find me accommodation? Will I be allowed leave overnight, even once a month?' The political officer bangs his fist on the table. He explains that a true Communist must do his duty to the Party, whether he has accommodation and free time or not. 'All right, I'll think about it,' I say. 'Yes, think about it--and soon,' he calls after me. This puts me in a tricky situation. If some local prostitute now goes to the political officer and reports that I have spent the night with her, they'll make me marry her straight away. That is the policy of the Party. And I am a member of the Party. If I had not joined the Party, it would not have allowed me to become a company commander. On the other hand, having joined the Party, I must be guided by its wise policies.

The KGB, too, keeps a close eye on me. In every company there are sure to be half a dozen informers. And who is the first person on whom they report? The company commander, of course, although they also report on the man who is trying to penetrate my very soul, the political officer. So the Chekist runs into me, apparently by chance. 'Drop in and we'll have a chat.' When I do so, he, too, encourages me to marry. The KGB, too, is keen to get every officer married. They won't give me accommodation or time off either but they will put pressure on me.

The KGB likes to have a spy in each officer's home. If I do something wrong and my wife falls out with me, she will keep the Chekist informed of my interests and my contacts.

3

The Army would prefer me not to drink at all. The Party does not express itself clearly on the subject. From one point of view alcohol is obviously highly undesirable, but against this, they reason, what am I likely to begin thinking about if my head is not spinning with the accursed stuff? The KGB simply avoids expressing any opinion, but whenever I meet the Chekist he always offers me something to drink. If I don't drink anything at all, I am unlikely to unburden myself to him. And, if I don't drink myself into a stupor each evening, how can he hope to hear about my innermost thoughts?

The Army totally disapproves of alcohol. And yet the regimental shop sells shoe-polish, toothpaste, vodka--a great deal of vodka--and nothing else at all. Evidently, the Army's position is dictated by pressure exerted by the Party and the KGB, neither of which ever clearly states its own points of view.

4

There has been more fighting--a new war in the Middle East. Once again, our 'brothers' have somehow suffered defeat. The Army requires me to explain to my soldiers the tactical errors which have led to this. I do so. I describe to them how a small, determined country wages war. No propaganda--heaven forbid! I simply describe the operations conducted by the two sides calmly and dispassionately, as if the war had been a game of chess.

Soon I find myself summoned to the political officer and then by the special department, too. So, no, this year I shan't be going to the Academy. If either the Party or the KGB are displeased with me, it is not worth the Army's while to stick up for me. My superiors are only human and they don't want to pick a fight with two such powerful forces just about me. There are plenty of other young officers in the Army this year who are eligible for the Academy in every respect.

Who Becomes a Soviet Officer and Why?

1

The great ideals of Socialism are simple and can be understood by anyone.

Society is built upon reasonable principles. Unemployment is a thing of the past. Medical services are free. Food, in reasonable quantities, is free, too. Every person has a separate room, with light and ventilation. Water, drainage and heating are free. Everyone has the right to some free time. There are no rich or poor. Everyone has comfortable, durable clothing, appropriate to the time of year--and this is, of course, provided free. Everyone is equal before the law.

You may say that this is nothing but a beautiful dream, that no one has ever succeeded in building pure socialism. Nonsense. In every country there are already islands of pure, untainted Socialism, in which each one of these requirements are met.

Is there a prison in your town? If so, go and take a look at it--you will find yourself in a society in which everyone is fed, and everyone has work, in which clothing, accommodation and heating are all provided free.

Soviet Communists are frequently reproached for having attempted to build a socialist society but having produced something which closely resembles a prison. Such a charge is entirely unjustified. In the Soviet Union some of the inmates have larger cells than others, some eat well, others badly. There is complete confusion--a lot remains to be done to tidy up the situation. True socialism, in which everyone is truly equal, does not just resemble a prison--it is a prison. It can not exist unless it is surrounded by high walls, by watchtowers and by guard-dogs, for people always want to escape from any socialist regime, just as they do from a prison. If you try to nationalise medicine and, from the best possible motives, to guarantee work for all the doctors, you will find that they pack their bags and leave the country. Try to bring a little order into the situation and your engineers (the best ones), your designers, your ballerinas (again, the best ones) and many, many others will also flee abroad. If you continue your attempts to establish a model society you will need to build walls around it. You will be forced to do this sooner or later by the flood of refugees.

2

The Politburo is the governing body of the prison. You should not abuse them for the privileges they possess. Those in charge of a prison must be better off in some ways than the convicts. The KGB are the warders, the Party is the administrative and educational organisation, the Army guards the walls.

When I am asked why I chose to become a Soviet officer, I say that those who serve as guards are better fed and have a pleasanter and more varied life than those in the cells. It was only some time after I joined the Army that I realised that it is far easier to escape from a prison if you are one of the guards. Trying to escape from a cell is a hopeless business.

In most states, life in the armed services is far more strictly regulated than it is for most of the inhabitants.

In the USSR, however, the reverse is true. The whole society finds itself in prison and, even though the Armed Services are kept under the tightest possible control (although even guards must be relieved), the life of an officer is far better than the drudgery which is the lot of the ordinary Soviet citizen.

While I was still one of those guarding our beloved prison, I carried out a sociological investigation among my brother officers, in an attempt to discover what had led them to tie themselves, hand and foot, to the Soviet Army, without expecting any guarantees or any form of contract. Naturally, I approached my colleagues with the greatest care and discretion.

'You remember,' I would ask, 'how, when Khrushchev came to power he had 1,200,000 men thrown out of the Army with a stroke of his pen? Your father was one of them; after another three months he would have completed 25 years' service. He was kicked out like a dog, without any sort of pension, in spite of his medals and despite the blood which he had shed for the country during his four years of war service. How did you, Kolya / Valentin / Konstantin Ivanovich, come to choose an officer's career in spite of that?'

I collected several hundred replies to my question. They all amounted to the same thing--everyone wanted to escape the drabness of life in our prison cells.

Higher Military Training Colleges

1

If you decide to become a Soviet officer, you would be well advised to lose no time and to submit your application as soon as you leave school.

The training of officers is carried out by Higher Military Colleges. The authorities consider, reasonably enough, that if you are to become a good officer you must first be a good soldier. Training at a college lasts for between four and five years and during this time a future officer leads a tough existence, which combines the hardships of a soldier's life in barracks with the penury of a Soviet student's existence. Instruction begins at the very beginning, with a ferocious course of square-bashing. The sergeants who put you through this have completely arbitrary powers over you, whether or not you have already put in two years of military service. Once you have decided to become an officer, therefore, it is better not to wait until you get swept up as a conscript but to try to get into a College immediately you leave school. Unless you succeed, you will simply lose two years, and you will find yourself spending longer in a private's uniform, which, as you may have realised already, is not a pleasant experience.

Until some years ago, officers were trained at military schools. The courses lasted between two and three years, depending on the arm of service concerned. These schools gave a medium-level military education and the students became lieutenants upon the completion of their studies. At the beginning of the 1960s, Khrushchev, who was going through a peace-loving phase, threw 1,200,000 officers and NCOs out of the Army. A Soviet officer has no contract or other guarantee of tenure and so, if someone still had a couple of months to go to complete 25 years of service, he was simply dismissed, with the tiniest of pensions if he was lucky. If he still had some days to serve before completing 20 years of service no matter how unblemished he was kicked out without anything. Most of these unfortunates were officers who had served at the front and had undergone the worst horrors of the Second World War.

The Party was delighted, because they were able to reduce expenditure considerably. However, these short-term gains eventually led to colossal expense. For many years, no one had the slightest desire to become an officer--you give the Army 24 years of your life and then they drive you out like a dog: what happens to you then? Immediately after the fall of Khrushchev, steps were taken to restore the

prestige of officers. Their uniforms were improved, their salaries were increased, and they were given a number of additional privileges. But this did not cause young men to rush to join the colours. They wanted permanent guarantees for the future. A current joke ran: 'If you can go to a tank training school--and they throw you out, you can become a tractor driver. If you go to a flying school, you can get straight into Aeroflot if you are sacked, but what will happen to political officers, if they make more cuts in the Army?' The answer was: 'Political officers can easily get jobs with the post office, sticking stamps on envelopes, because they have such long tongues.'

The solution which was found eventually was a good one for individuals as well as for the State. All military training schools were to be up-graded from medium to higher educational establishments and every student was to receive a university education and to be trained for a civilian profession, as well as for an army career.

First, the course of instruction given at the infantry training schools was reorganised, since it was the infantry which was feeling the shortage of junior commanders most acutely. The length of the course was increased from two years to four. Graduates from the school continued to emerge with a medium-level military education and the rank of lieutenant, but from now on they also received a higher general education, a normal university diploma and civilian professional training. The civilian professions for which those attending Higher Military Training Colleges are prepared normally include automobile engineering and the teaching of mathematics, physics, history, geography and foreign languages. Once the infantry training schools had been reorganised in this way. Colleges for tank, airborne and artillery officers were set up, and then, finally, others to serve the remaining arms of service.

2

At present there are 154 Higher Military Training Colleges in the Soviet Union. Their courses last for between four and five years. Each College has about 1,000 students and each therefore turns out between 200 and 250 lieutenants a year. Each has a Major-General, a Lieutenant-General or even a Colonel-General as Commandant.

In selecting a College one is, of course, completely ignorant of the choices which are available. Once a year the Army newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* publishes a long list of Colleges, together with their addresses and very brief explanatory notes on each.

You study this, scratch your head and plump for one of the Colleges which seems to cater for your interests. However, there are usually several which specialise in each field of study--thus, for instance, there are seven tank colleges. Some people choose the one closest to their homes but others may select one which is far away, in Central Asia or the Far Eastern Military District, because it is easier to get into.

However, there is so little information in the newspaper that you cannot even form the vaguest idea of what lies ahead of you. For instance, in the Tashkent Tank Officers Training College, in addition to the normal faculties, there is another faculty which trains tank officer cadets for service with the Airborne Forces. When you pass your examinations, you receive your officer's shoulder-boards and swear your oath of allegiance and then you suddenly find, to your great surprise, that you are to begin parachute training very shortly and that you are going to spend all your life jumping out of aircraft, until you break your neck.

The Moscow Officers Training College has no faculties at all, the one in Kiev, although it is in exactly the same category, has both general and reconnaissance faculties, and in Baku there is a marine infantry faculty. In Blagoveshchensk there is a specialist faculty which trains officers for work in Fortified Areas, and in Ryazan, besides a normal faculty, the Airborne Officers Training College contains a faculty which trains officers for diversionary units.

The young entrant, of course, knows none of this, so he may therefore end up, quite unintentionally, in a diversionary unit, in the marine infantry--or, indeed, anywhere else at all.

The situation is the same in the Air Force Officers Training Colleges--one trains fighter pilots, another pilots for transport aircraft and a third those who will fly long-range bombers for the Navy. But, of course, no one will explain this to you before you enter that particular college.

This is, perhaps, not so bad, but there are many Colleges about which nothing at all is said. For instance, the Serpukhov Engineer Officers Training College. If you look at the papers set for its entrance examinations, you will realise that they are unusually difficult. Some people are put off by this but it attracts others. If you succeed in gaining a place there, you will discover, during your second year, that you are being trained for service with the Strategic Rocket Forces.

3

Having chosen a College which appears to cater for your interests, even though you have no real idea what it offers, you should immediately apply to its commandant, saying that you want to become an officer and explaining what you want to do, attach your school-leaving certificate, references from your school and from the Komsomol and send everything off as quickly as possible to the College. In due course you will be summoned to sit the entrance examination.

My own choice was straightforward--the Kharkov Guards Tank Officers Training College. I scribbled my way through four exams, without particular difficulty. They tested me to find out what level I had reached at school, but it was clear that the standard of my knowledge was not particularly important and that they were more interested in my speed of reaction, in my general level of development and in the range of my interests. More important than the written tests were the medical examinations and the tests of physical development. Secretly, before candidates were summoned to the examinations, of course, enquiries about them had been made with the local KGB offices; nothing was done until these were completed. The decisive part of the selection process, however, was a discussion which lasted for several hours, during which one's suitability--or lack of it--for commissioned rank in the Soviet Army was explored. The assembly line moves fast. Three or four applications are usually received for each vacancy. Every evening there is a parade, at which one of the officers reads out the names of those who have been given a place and of those who have been rejected. Every morning, a new batch of hopefuls arrives and every evening, after a week spent at the College, groups of disappointed would-be entrants leave. If they have not done their military service they will be called up before long.

I was successful and joined a battalion--300 strong of young, shaven-headed new cadets. We were divided into three companies, each of three platoons. We were commanded by a lieutenant-colonel, who had a major as his deputy and political officer. The companies were commanded by majors, the platoons by captains and senior lieutenants. At that point we had no sergeants. In my own platoon of 33, only one had done his military service. All the rest had come straight from school. Evidently, not many of those who had already had the opportunity to see how an officer lived wished to take up the army as a career. The first night after the battalion had been formed we found ourselves on a troop train, in goods wagons. No one knew where we were going. We travelled for three whole days and then we arrived at a training division. Most of us had only the vaguest idea what this meant, but one cadet, who had already served in the army for two years, became quite agitated. He had certainly not expected this. During his army service with a tank unit, he had been a

loader and he had therefore escaped service with a training division, but he had heard a lot about such units. And now he found himself in one, with a contingent of scum.

The battalion now acquired sergeants--of the type who run training divisions--and life began to gather speed. Reveille, PT, training exercises, disgusting food, cold, night alerts. And together with this, came orders such as 'Take a matchstick, measure the corridor with it, and then come and tell me how long the corridor is'. Or, 'Take your toothbrush and clean out the latrine. Report to me on the progress you've made by dawn'.

No higher education for you for the present, my friends; first we must make good soldiers out of you!

A training division knocks all the independence and insubordination out of you. You learn a lot while you are there. You are taught to understand others and to represent them. You learn how to recognise scoundrels and how to find friends.

The first lesson which you learn is that soldiers and future officers must not be afraid of tanks. During each of the first few days you spend several hours getting used to them. At first it is easy--you lie at the bottom of a concrete-lined trench while a tank roars round and round above your head, crushing the concrete with its tracks as it does so. Then things get a bit more complicated--you are told that you are to take shelter in an unlined slit trench, which you are to dig. You are told that, provided you make the trench narrow enough, you will be safe. However, you are also told to cover your head with your tunic, so that if the trench should cave in, you will have a few lungfuls of air, which should be enough to enable you to dig yourself out. Next, you are told that you will be given one and a half minutes to dig your trench--and to jump into it, curled up like a hedgehog. You can see the tank, waiting not far away. Both of you are given the signal to start at the same moment. You start digging like a mole, as the tank bears down on you...

And so you carry on, day after day, sweating your guts out, until you have spots in front of your eyes, until you vomit from fatigue, until you collapse with exhaustion.

There is a lot more fun to be had during the training, besides your introduction to tanks--napalm, gas, rubber protective clothing worn in the blazing sun, barbed-wire obstacles

'Accursed barbed wire obstacle
Creation of the 20th century
By the time a man has climbed across you
He is no more than half a man'

--and the eternal pressure to save seconds. And the constant uncertainty...

After six months we finish the training course and the time for assessment arrives. Hitherto, we have worn ordinary soldiers' shoulder-boards, but now, after the course, we are given black velvet ones with the gold stitching and the red piping of the cadets of a Tank Officers Training College. But not all of us get these. Forty out of our 300 received the shoulder-boards of junior sergeants and were sent off to become tank commanders and tank gunners. Our College did not ever want to see them darken its doors again.

The battalion was re-formed. Now it had only two companies, each of 130 cadets. We were sent back to the College for the next three and a half years.

4

The life of a cadet at a College is very little different from the one he led in the training division. The shoulder-boards are different, it is true, and he receives 10

rubles a month instead of 3. (In his third year he receives 15 and in his fourth 20.) And the food is better. But every College has a training centre. A cadet spends one or two weeks at the College studying theory--both military and civil. Then he goes to the training centre for the next one or two weeks. There he spends his time driving, shooting, doing night exercises, platoon engagements, encounter battles with tank companies, more driving, more familiarisation exercises with tanks and with napalm. More pressure to save seconds. More uncertainty.

You are constantly driven out of the College. The time you spend there only counts towards your army service if you are there for medical reasons. But since everyone is robustly healthy, this really does not apply.

One night, my friend Pashka Kovalev, who was already in his fourth year, with three months to go before he graduated, broke out of barracks. He had a girl-friend in Kharkov. He was away for three hours. He managed to get through the barbed-wire and other obstacles on his way back in without being spotted and he slipped quietly into bed. Before leaving, he had put his rolled greatcoat into the bed, and had laid out his dress uniform and boots beside it, in accordance with regulations. As a rule, anyone carrying out a kit inspection during the night would be sure to check that all footwear was properly displayed. But Pashka was clever--he made his unauthorised trip in running shoes.

Reveille, PT, and breakfast went by without incident. Then came the review period. There were about a thousand of us on parade. We stood, freezing, and listened to a string of orders issued by different authorities. These were read out in order of seniority: first came those from the Minister of Defence, then others from the Commander of the Military District, more from his director of training and, finally, those issued by the College Commandant. Suddenly, and without warning, Pashka was called out of the ranks and an order for his expulsion was read. His velvet shoulder-boards were ripped off and replaced with those worn by a private soldier. His absence had been detected by a surprise check during the night. The cadets who had been on guard duty that night were immediately arrested and thrown in the cells for ten days. Others were being woken up to take their place, as the commission which had made the check departed. They were told nothing of what had occurred. Pashka returned towards morning, crept in through a window in the latrines and got back into his bed. He did not realise that the guard had been changed and assumed he had got away with it. But, while he was breaking in, the order for his expulsion was being already drafted by the staff. It took no account of the four years he had spent at the College--four years which had made him feel that he was already almost an officer. He was sent to the training division at which we began our service.

Long afterwards, I heard that he had not been able to endure life in the training division, that he had finally refused to obey orders and had hit a sergeant. For this he was sent to a penal battalion for two years--which did not, of course, count as part of his military service. After this he would have been returned to the unit which had sent him to the penal battalion--the training division. Whether he ever did go back I do not know--I never heard anything more about him.

Duties and Military Ranks

I knocked on the door, waited for permission to enter and went in. The regimental commander, Colonel Dontsov, was standing. Despite this, a major, whom I did not recognise, was sitting by his side. I saluted smartly, clicking my heels as I did so.

`Comrade Colonel, may I have permission to make my report?'

`Ask the Major for permission.'

I turned quickly to the Major.

`Excuse me, Comrade Major, I am Senior Lieutenant Suvorov. May I report to Colonel Dontsov?'

The major nodded, expressionlessly. I report to the colonel on a duty trip I had just finished. He asked a few questions and then nodded, showing that he had no more to say. I again turned to the major.

`Comrade Major, may I have permission to leave?'

He said that I might go. I turned and went out.

The situation had been clear to me from the moment I entered. While I had been away from the unit, an officer of greater importance than our regimental commander had arrived, as his superior (and therefore also mine). If this major was more important than the commander of a regiment, he must be the equivalent of at least a deputy divisional commander.

In the corridor I met one of the orderly room clerks and I asked him, `Who's this new major, who is lording it over the boss?'

`He's an important man,' said the clerk, with some awe. `He is the new divisional chief of staff, Major Oganskiy.'

I whistled: from now on I knew whom to salute, whom to click my heels to.

2

The system of awarding military ranks in the Soviet Army is a fairly simple one, but it is different from those used elsewhere and therefore needs to be explained.

The system came into use during the war--effectively at the time of the battle for Stalingrad. In other words, it dates from the time when the Soviet Union first began to aspire to become a super-power. It is designed to take maximum advantage of the rivalry between the officers on each rung of the promotion ladder and to ensure that advancement comes as quickly as possible to the staunchest supporters of the regime--the hardest, most callous, most masterful and most competent.

To achieve this, the Soviet system applies the following simple rules:

1. Seniority depends, not on rank but on appointment. Only when two officers have no professional connection with one another, is seniority determined by rank.

2. An officer's eligibility for a higher appointment depends, not on his rank or length of service, but on his ability to command.

3. The time spent in a particular appointment is not limited in any way. Thus, an officer may command a platoon for the whole of his service or he may be given greater responsibility within a few months.

4. The appointment held by an officer makes him eligible for a particular rank. However, he is not given this rank unless he occupies an adequately responsible place on the ladder of service and has served for a given number of years.

The system for the advancement and promotion of officers in peacetime works in exactly the same way as it did during the war. We will therefore illustrate it with wartime examples.

Imagine that the deputy commander of a battalion is killed in action. A replacement is needed without delay. The battalion commander has only a limited choice. There

are three companies in his battalion and the commander of one of these companies must take his deputy's place. In making his choice, the battalion commander will ignore an individual's expectations, his length of service and the number of stars on his shoulderboards. What he needs, quickly, is the man who, in his opinion, will measure up best to new responsibilities. Of the three candidates one is, let us say, a captain, the second a senior lieutenant and the third a lieutenant who arrived recently from his military training school and who has been in command of his company for two weeks. The battalion commander knows that the captain is a heavy drinker, the senior lieutenant is a coward but that the lieutenant is neither of these. He therefore appoints the lieutenant as his deputy. The lieutenant will be promoted to a higher rank later, but the two other officers, with whom he was on equal terms until this moment, are now his subordinates. Shortly afterwards, the battalion commander is killed, at which point our lieutenant automatically takes his place, leaving the post of deputy battalion commander vacant once again. The new battalion commander must now decide--very quickly--who should fill the vacancy. He could select the alcoholic captain, although almost anyone else would be better, or he might choose a lieutenant who is even younger than him, who finished his training even more recently than he did, but who received better marks at the training school than he did himself.

Here are some examples from real-life. The first is from 1944, when the 29th Guards Rifle Division found itself in urgent need of a commanding officer for one of its regiments. Captain I. M. Tretyak was chosen. He was only twenty-one, but he had three and a half years of continuous service in action behind him. During these years he had worked his way steadily up the promotion ladder, having held every rank, one after the other. Understandably, he tended to be chosen whenever an officer was needed for a more responsible post. He was promoted later on but for the time being he commanded the regiment while still a captain. Under his command were eight lieutenant-colonels, and dozens of majors and captains. Subsequently he continued up the ladder with the same speed. Today he is a Marshal.

In 1942 the 51st Army was left without a commanding officer. The senior command decided that the best candidate for this post was Colonel A. M. Kuznetsov. The brigades and divisions in the army were commanded by generals, a general commanded each of the corps and, in four cases, had another general as deputy, the Army's administrative and staff departments bulged with still more generals, but Colonel Kuznetsov suddenly ascended, through their midst, to lead them all. He became the commander--he was the one you had to click your heels to.

The 58th Army, too, was commanded by a Colonel--N. A. Moskvin--in spite of the fact that there were generals galore on the Army's strength. But it was Colonel Moskvin to whom they and all their men became answerable, for he was the man whom the higher command selected as the best officer available. The situation in peacetime remains exactly as it was during the war. The time an officer spends doing a particular job is not limited by any rules or regulations. Young officers arrive from their colleges and are given platoons. The regimental commander has the right to take one of them and put him in command of a company--and he can do this after the officer has been in charge of a platoon for only one day. In his own interests, a regimental commander will always select the harshest, the most demanding, and the most dependable of the officers at his disposal for the post.

A divisional commander appoints his deputy battalion commanders and all officers holding equivalent appointments under him. However, he may only make his choice from officers who have reached the immediately preceding grade--that is from among his company commanders but not from the latter's platoon commanders. In order to rise to the post of deputy battalion commander, a young officer must first please his regimental commander sufficiently to be put in charge of a company and then he

must find favour with the divisional commander--without, however, falling out with his regimental commander, who has enough power to ruin the career of any officer who is under his command.

An Army Commander can choose his battalion commanders, but these must come from those who have done the job of deputy battalion commander. The Commander of a Military District can select and appoint deputies for his regimental commanders from any of his battalion commanders. Regimental commanders are appointed by the Minister of Defence.

The same procedure is followed at other levels. The chief of staff of a Military District appoints battalion chiefs of staff, the Chief of the General Staff chooses the chiefs of staff for regiments.

All officers higher than regimental commander are appointed by the Administrative Department of the Central Committee. Appointments senior to that of divisional commander must also be ratified by the Politburo. However, the Politburo follows the principle used throughout--seniority is determined not by rank but by the appointment held--for it was the Politburo itself which devised this principle.

Each appointment in the Soviet Army is open only to officers of not more than a certain rank. Thus, a platoon commander may not be more than a senior lieutenant. Similarly, as regards command appointments:

A company commander may not be more than a captain. A deputy battalion commander may not be more than a major.

A battalion commander/deputy regimental commander may not be more than a lieutenant-colonel.

A regimental commander/deputy divisional commander may not be more than a colonel.

A divisional commander/deputy Army commander may not be more than a major-general.

An Army Commander may not be more than a lieutenant-general.

A Front or Military District Commander may not be more than a general of the Army.

Minister of Defence, Chief of the General Staff, Chief of a Strategic Direction, Chief of an Armed Service may not be more than a Marshal of the Soviet Union.

The Supreme Commander during wartime ranks as Generalissimo of the Soviet Union.

The same applies to non-command appointments. Thus:

The chief of staff of a battalion must not be more than a major.

The chief of staff of a regiment must not be more than a lieutenant-colonel.

The chief of staff of a division must not be more than a colonel.

The chief of staff of a Army must not be more than a major-general. The chief of staff of a Front must not be more than a lieutenant-general. The chief of staff of a Strategic Direction must not be more than a colonel-general. The chief of the General Staff is a Marshal of the Soviet Union.

In the financial branch, to take a further example, the financial section of a regiment will be headed by a captain, of a division by a major, of an Army by a lieutenant-colonel, of a Front or Military District by a major-general. The senior officer of the entire branch is a colonel-general.

An officer is given an appointment without reference to his rank: he will receive any promotion due to him subsequently. The following are the minimum times for which an officer must remain at each rank:

Junior lieutenant ¹ ... 2 years
Lieutenant ... 3 years
Senior lieutenant ... 3 years
Captain ... 4 years
Major ... 4 years
Lieutenant-colonel ... 5 years
Above this rank there are no fixed terms.

Normally, the graduate of a Higher Military Training College (at which he has spent 4 years) becomes a lieutenant at 21. In theory, he will reach the rank of lieutenant-colonel in 19 years. However, in order to receive each promotion, he must not only serve for the requisite number of years but he must also be acceptable for an appointment which carries this rank.

If you are a platoon commander, provided that your platoon's performance is satisfactory, you will automatically become a senior lieutenant after three years. After three more years you become eligible for the next rank, that of captain. However, if you are still with your platoon, not having succeeded in being chosen to command a company, you will not be promoted. If you are already in charge of a company, or have progressed still further up the ladder, you will receive your captain's star immediately. Four years later, the time comes when you can be promoted to major; provided that you are by now deputy commander of a battalion your progress will not be held up. If you are still a company commander, you will have to wait for promotion. If you are never able to show that you are better than the other company commanders and that you should be promoted before them, you will never become a major.

In principle, therefore, an officer's appointment opens the way for his promotion, but promotion only follows after the completion of a certain number of years' service spent in the preceding rank. If you have ever been held back, and have lost some years in one particular rank, you will never catch up. When you are eventually promoted, you will still have to serve for the prescribed number of years in your new rank before you become eligible for the next one.

¹ This rank is given only to those who have undergone a shorter course of training.

3

Here is another example from life. In August 1941, General Major A. M. Vasilyevskiy was appointed to head the Operational Directorate of the General Staff. At the same time he also became deputy to the Chief of the General Staff. The Operational (or First) Directorate of the General Staff is responsible for producing war plans.

This post is one of enormous importance by any standards, not only those of the Red Army. It is enough to say that it is in this Directorate that the Soviet Union's 5-year economic plans originate; thereafter, the Council of Ministers and the State Planning Commission decide how the requirements of the General Staffs are to be met, before proceeding, with the highly secret military plan as a basis, to draw up the All-Union Plan, in both its secret and open variants.

The German intelligence services concluded that the appointment of a mere colonel to such an august position was an indication that the role of the General Staff was being reduced in importance. The reason that they made this mistake was that the

Germans did not understand the Red Army's simple principle--seniority is not determined by rank, but by appointment. Rank follows appointment, slowly but surely, just as infantry follows tanks which have suddenly and forcefully broken through into the rear of the enemy.

In fact there was nothing particularly astonishing about the appointment of the General Major to such a high post: the explanation was, quite simply, that the Supreme Commander decided that this particular officer would meet the demands of the job better than anyone else. This Vasilyevskiy did--within eight months he had become Chief of the General Staff.

Since he had risen to so high an appointment, the way to considerable further promotion was open to him. Stars rained down on his shoulderboards. He passed quickly through the hierarchy of generals, wearing the four stars of a General of the Army for a mere twenty-nine days before being promoted to the rank of Marshal. After the end of the war with Germany he carried out a brilliant operation in Manchuria, becoming Commander-in-Chief of the Far Eastern Strategic Direction.

But we must not be misled. The Red Army is an enormous organisation and not everyone can succeed as Vasilyevskiy did. I have met hundreds of senior lieutenants who will stay at this rank for the rest of their lives.

Military Academies

1

In order to achieve high rank you need an appropriately senior appointment: in order to be considered for such an appointment you must have completed a course of studies at a Military Academy.

It will be recalled that Higher Military Training Colleges provide a higher general education but only a medium-level military one. Higher military education is the province of the Military Academies, of which there are 13 at present. Among these are the Frunze All-Arms, Armoured, Artillery, Engineering, Military-Political, Naval, two Air Force, two Rocket, Air Defence, and Chemical Warfare Academies. Officers spend three years at an Academy, which may be headed by a Colonel-General, a General of the Army, a Marshal of one of the arms of service or even the Chief Marshal of a particular service.

The road to an Academy is a hard one. First, one must have commanded at least a company. Secondly, the sub-units under your command must achieve excellent ratings for two years (which means that you must lay in enough vodka and proceed to pour it into the commissions which come to check you until they are afloat with it--assuming, of course, that they consent to drink with you at all). Thirdly, approval for your application for entry is required from all your superior officers up to and including your divisional commander. Any of these officers has the right to stop your application from going on to his immediate superior. If one of them does so you will have to wait until the following year and your battalion or company will have to maintain its excellent record. Finally, you will have to pass examinations, a medical commission, and interviews and, thereafter, succeed against the competition within the Academy itself.

Unless an officer manages to secure a place at an Academy, he will never command more than a battalion. If he is successful, he has three years of intensive work on a very wide-ranging and detailed curriculum. After graduation, wide horizons stretch before him. Quite young majors are frequently made regimental commanders, or,

failing that, deputy regimental commanders, as soon as they have completed the course. Whatever happens the path upwards is now open.

2

Towering above all the Academies is the General Staff Academy. Entry to this is free of all the competition, examinations, applications and other problems involved in admission to the others. Everything is done for you by the Administrative Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU. The Central Committee selects those who will head the Red Army in the immediate future from among all the colonels who show promise and who are truly dedicated to the regime.

Of course, all the entrants to the General Staff Academy have already studied at a Higher Military Training College and then at the Frunze Armoured or Air Academies, or at one of the others.

The lowest rank held by entrants is colonel and there are often several colonel-generals on the current list of those attending. Commanders of Armies, Military Districts, Groups of Tank Armies, Flotillas and Fleets are often invited to visit the Academy by the Central Committee.

Having completed his studies at this Academy, a general will rise higher and higher, leaving his former rivals far behind.

Generals

1

'How fine to be a General' runs a line from a popular song. And, indeed, seen from below, the life led by a general does seem to be a quite sublime existence.

A Soviet general enjoys a great many privileges. If he wishes, he can acquire his own harem. Soviet ideology will not stand in his way. Every divisional commander, every Army, Front and Military District commander has signal units, communications centres and telephone switchboards under his command, staffed by attractive girls who have been security-vetted. The general is their absolute master. He guards them jealously against the attentions of others.

While I was with the 24th Division, a senior lieutenant who was a friend of mine, became friendly with an attractive girl from the divisional communications battalion. He was hauled before an Officer's Court of Honour which sentenced him to revert to the rank of lieutenant. The girl was dismissed from the army, immediately. He had to face a charge of having attempted to penetrate the divisional communications centre, in which there were secret command channels and she was accused of complicity. Both were enormously relieved when these accusations were dropped and delighted to have escaped as lightly as they did. This episode served as a lesson to the whole division. During the same period, the divisional commander, in order to ensure that he kept in touch with the girls under his command, organised a number of them into a shooting team. On their days off, he would pack his 'markswomen' into his car, take them off to the divisional firing range and train them, personally, there. Imagine the scene--a vast, empty stretch of country in the Carpathian mountains, a huge area, carefully guarded and completely shut off from the world. Thickly wooded mountains, rocky slopes intersected by streams rushing downhill over rapids--without a living soul for miles around. On Sundays, our general was joined at the range by the local Party

bosses, who used to bring their own girls from Lvov. He trained them, too. He was quite a man...

On a rather higher level, the entertainment of generals in the Soviet Army is catered for by professionals. Every Military District, Group of Forces and Fleet has its own troupe of singers and dancers. These are made up of professional performers, who are under contract to the Armed Services. They are subject to military discipline, for they are employees of the Armed Services just like the Army's doctors, nurses, typists and so forth. The Army is a more generous employer than any others. The girls in these ensembles--singers and dancers--are kept continuously and intensively at work entertaining the command staff. Generals' dachas have long since been transformed into temples dedicated to the worship not of Marx and Lenin but of Bacchus and Venus.

Athletically inclined young girls, especially gymnasts, are in special demand among our military leaders. The Army's Central Sports Club is one of the largest and richest in the USSR. Girls who have no connection whatsoever with the Armed Services can join this organisation and have all their living expenses paid. Sport in the USSR is an entirely professional affair. Sportsmen or sportswomen are paid, fed, clothed, and given decorations, accommodation and cars for their services--and the better they are the more they are paid. But their free and easy life must still be paid for by the athletes themselves. The girls pay in kind, becoming involved in prostitution while they are still very young. Those who are most amenable, as well as those who are most talented, are led by their coaches to the highest realms of professional sport.

2

What more can the generals want from life? Their dachas are huge and luxurious. Marshal Chuykov's dacha, for example, was built for him by two brigades of engineers, each of four battalions. More than 2,500 men were involved and they had the use of the best military engineering equipment.

Our military leaders fly off on hunting trips in helicopters, which they then use to drive game through nature reserves. They are given everything they need--quarters, cars, and all the cognac and caviare they want. Surely theirs must be a perfect existence? And yet the number of senior military leaders who commit suicide is exceptionally high. Of course, they do not shoot themselves when they become too fat or sated to go on but when rivals seize them by the throat and wrest their power from them.

During the Great Purge, 33,000 officers with the rank of brigade commander or above were executed in a single year. 'But that was in Stalin's day' I shall be told--as if the very name of Stalin explains everything. But even since Stalin's day, generals have not been able to sleep peacefully at night. They are constantly plagued by uncertainty. Although Stalin is dead and gone, generals are still being offered up as sacrifices. The first victim was Lieutenant-General Vasiliy Stalin. He was thrown into a mental asylum immediately after Stalin's death and there he died, quietly and quickly. While his father was still alive, no one had diagnosed any abnormality. He was as strong as a bull; he was the only general of his rank in the whole Soviet Army who flew jet-planes.

After Stalin's death, Marshal of the Soviet Union Konev shot Marshal of the Soviet Union Beriya during a session of the Politburo itself. Next, Marshal of the Soviet Union Bulganin lost his rank and was driven in disgrace from his position at the head of the Soviet government. There was also the case of Marshal of the Soviet Union Kulik, demoted to major-general by Stalin, who had then sent him to prison and announced that he was dead. After Stalin, Kulik was released from prison and restored to his rank

of lieutenant-general. He was promised promotion to Marshal if he could organise the design and production of the first Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile. He succeeded and in 1957 he again became a Marshal of the Soviet Union, although no explanation of his return from the dead was ever made public. When he received a telegram from the government announcing this and congratulating him, Kulik collapsed and died, from a heart attack, at the rocket range at Kapustin Yar. According to one story, when he received the telegram he shot himself.

Such has been the fate of various Marshals. The generals fare worse. They are plagued, endlessly, by uncertainty. In one day, in February 1960, Khrushchev sacked 500 generals from the Soviet Army.

No Soviet general, and for that matter no Soviet officer or soldier--no single member of this enormous organisation--has any guarantee that he will be allowed to retain his privileges, his rank or even his life. They may drive him out, like an old dog, at any moment: they may stand him against a wall and shoot him.

Conclusion

Why don't they protest? Why don't they rebel? Can they really enjoy living like this? Why are they silent?

An excursion guide once showed me an area in a large Western city which he said was entirely controlled by the Mafia. Prostitutes, drug-peddlers, shoeblacks, shopkeepers, owners of restaurants, cafes and hotels--all of them controlled, and protected by the Mafia.

Once we had emerged, unscathed, from this unhappy district, in our large tourist bus, and felt that we were back in safety, I put these same questions to our apprehensive guide. Why the hell didn't they protest? Everyone living there had grown up in freedom and democracy; behind them lay centuries of freedom of speech, of the press and of assembly. Yet, despite these centuries-old traditions, the inhabitants were silent. They had a free press on their side, the population of the entire country, running into many millions, the police, political parties, parliament, the government itself. And yet they said nothing. They made no protest.

The society from which I fled is not simply a spacious well-lit prison, providing free medical care and full employment. It, too, is under the control of a Mafia. The difference between Soviet society and the Western city which I visited, is that those who live where I used to live are unable to turn to the police for help, because the police themselves represent the mailed fist of our Mafia. The army is another section--the most aggressive one--of the Soviet Mafia. The government is the ruling body of the Mafia: parliament is the old people's home in which the aged leaders of the Mafia are cared for. Press, television, the judges, the prosecutors--these are not influenced by the Mafia--they are the Mafia.

Smart tourist buses pass through our unhappy capital. The drivers and guides belong to the Mafia. 'Intourist' works for the KGB. 'Aeroflot', is controlled by the military intelligence service, the GRU. Foreign tourists sit listening to the patter of the guides and wondering with amazement--why don't they protest? Can they really enjoy living like this? In their place, they think, I would write to the papers, or organise a demonstration. But clearly the KGB has stifled inhabitants so that they are unable to protest. The KGB has driven them to their knees and made them slaves.

My friend, you are right. We are slaves: we are on our knees: we are silent: we do not protest.

According to the estimates of demographers, based on official Soviet statistics, the population of my country should have reached 315 million in 1959. Instead, the

census showed only 209 million. Only our own government knows what happened to the missing hundred million. Hitler is said to have executed 20 million. But where are the others? You must agree that no criminal organisation in your own country has shown such activity as our Soviet Mafia.

Having brought my countrymen to their knees, the Mafia triumvirate of the KGB, Party and Army moved on to conquer neighbouring countries. Today they are busy in your country, in your home town. They have stated openly that it is their dearest wish to do to the world what they have done to my country. They make no secret of it.

I spent thirty years of my life on my knees. Then I got up and ran. This was the only way I could protest against the system. Are you surprised, my dear Western friend, that I did not demonstrate against the KGB while I was living there? Well, there is something which surprises me, too. In your own beautiful country, the KGB, that monstrous organisation, is hard at work at this very moment, the Soviet Communist Party is subsidising a horde of paid hacks and crackpots. Soviet Military Intelligence is sending members of its diversionary units to visit your country, so that they can practise parachuting on to your native soil. The aim of all this activity is, quite simply, to bring you to your knees. Why don't you protest?

Protest today. Tomorrow it will be too late.

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Viktor Suvorov. Spetsnaz.

The Inside Story of the Soviet Special Forces

To Natasha and Alexander

Every infantryman in the Soviet Army carries with him a small spade. When he is given the order to halt he immediately lies flat and starts to dig a hole in the ground beside him. In three minutes he will have dug a little trench 15 centimetres deep, in which he can lie stretched out flat, so that bullets can whistle harmlessly over his head. The earth he has dug out forms a breastwork in front and at the side to act as an additional cover. If a tank drives over such a trench the soldier has a 50% chance that it will do him no harm. At any moment the soldier may be ordered to advance again and, shouting at the top of his voice, will rush ahead. If he is not ordered to advance, he digs in deeper and deeper. At first his trench can be used for firing in the lying position. Later it becomes a trench from which to fire in the kneeling position, and later still, when it is 110 centimetres deep, it can be used for firing in the standing position. The earth that has been dug out protects the soldier from bullets and fragments. He makes an embrasure in this breastwork into which he positions the barrel of his gun. In the absence of any further commands he continues to work on his trench. He camouflages it. He starts to dig a trench to connect with his comrades to the left of him. He always digs from right to left, and in a few hours the unit has a trench linking all the riflemen's trenches together. The unit's trenches are linked with the trenches of other units. Dug-outs are built and communication trenches are added at the rear. The trenches are made deeper, covered over, camouflaged and reinforced. Then, suddenly, the order to advance comes again. The soldier emerges, shouting and swearing as loudly as he can.

The infantryman uses the same spade for digging graves for his fallen comrades. If he doesn't have an axe to hand he uses the spade to chop his bread when it is frozen hard as granite. He uses it as a paddle as he floats across wide rivers on a telegraph pole under enemy fire. And when he gets the order to halt, he again builds his impregnable fortress around himself. He knows how to dig the earth efficiently. He builds his fortress exactly as it should be. The spade is not just an instrument for digging: it can also be used for measuring. It is 50 centimetres long. Two spade lengths are a metre. The blade is 15 centimetres wide and 18 centimetres long. With these measurements in mind the soldier can measure anything he wishes.

The infantry spade does not have a folding handle, and this is a very important feature. It has to be a single monolithic object. All three of its edges are as sharp as a knife. It is painted with a green matt paint so as not to reflect the strong sunlight.

The spade is not only a tool and a measure. It is also a guarantee of the steadfastness of the infantry in the most difficult situations. If the infantry have a few hours to dig themselves in, it could take years to get them out of their holes and trenches, whatever modern weapons are used against them.

In this book we are not talking about the infantry but about soldiers belonging to other units, known as *spetsnaz*. These soldiers never dig trenches; in fact they never take up defensive positions. They either launch a sudden attack on an enemy or, if they meet with resistance or superior enemy forces, they disappear as quickly as they appeared and attack the enemy again where and when the enemy least expects them to appear.

Surprisingly, the *spetsnaz* soldiers also carry the little infantry spades. Why do they need them? It is practically impossible to describe in words how they use their spades. You really have to see what they do with them. In the hands of a *spetsnaz* soldier the spade is a terrible noiseless weapon and every member of *spetsnaz* gets much more training in the use of his spade than does the infantryman. The first thing he has to teach himself is precision: to split little slivers of wood with the edge of the spade or to cut off the neck of a bottle so that the bottle remains whole. He has to learn to love his spade and have faith in its accuracy. To do that he places his hand on the stump of a tree with the fingers spread out and takes a big swing at the stump with his right hand using the edge of the spade. Once he has learnt to use the spade well and truly as an axe he is taught more complicated things. The little spade can be used in hand-to-hand fighting against blows from a bayonet, a knife, a fist or another spade. A soldier armed with nothing but the spade is shut in a room without windows along with a mad dog, which makes for an interesting contest. Finally a soldier is taught to throw the spade as accurately as he would use a sword or a battle-axe. It is a wonderful weapon for throwing, a single, well-balanced object, whose 32-centimetre handle acts as a lever for throwing. As it spins in flight it gives the spade accuracy and thrust. It becomes a terrifying weapon. If it lands in a tree it is not so easy to pull out again. Far more serious is it if it hits someone's skull, although *spetsnaz* members usually do not aim at the enemy's face but at his back. He will rarely see the blade coming, before it lands in the back of his neck or between his shoulder blades, smashing the bones.

The *spetsnaz* soldier loves his spade. He has more faith in its reliability and accuracy than he has in his Kalashnikov automatic. An interesting psychological detail has been observed in the kind of hand-to-hand confrontations which are the stock in trade of *spetsnaz*. If a soldier fires at an enemy armed with an automatic, the enemy also shoots at him. But if he doesn't fire at the enemy but throws a spade at him instead, the enemy simply drops his gun and jumps to one side.

This is a book about people who throw spades and about soldiers who work with spades more surely and more accurately than they do with spoons at a table. They do, of course, have other weapons besides their spades.

Chapter 2. *Spetsnaz* and the GRU

It is impossible to translate the Russian word *razvedka* precisely into any foreign language. It is usually rendered as 'reconnaissance' or 'spying' or 'intelligence gathering'. A fuller explanation of the word is that it describes any means and any actions aimed at obtaining information about an enemy, analysing it and understanding it properly.

Every Soviet military headquarters has its own machinery for gathering and analysing information about the enemy. The information thus collected and analysed about the enemy is passed on to other headquarters, higher up, lower down and on the same level, and each headquarters in turn receives information about the enemy not only from its own sources but also from the other headquarters.

If some military unit should be defeated in battle through its ignorance of the enemy, the commanding officer and his chief of staff have no right to blame the fact that they were not well enough informed about the enemy. The most important task for every commander and chief of staff is that, without waiting for information to arrive from elsewhere, they must organise their own sources of information about the enemy and warn their own forces and their superior headquarters of any danger that is threatened.

Spetsnaz is one of the forms of Soviet military *razvedka* which occupies a place somewhere between reconnaissance and intelligence.

It is the name given to the shock troops of *razvedka* in which there are combined elements of espionage, terrorism and large-scale partisan operations. In personal terms, this covers a very diverse range of people: secret agents recruited by Soviet military *razvedka* among foreigners for carrying out espionage and terrorist operations; professional units composed of the country's best sportsmen; and units made up of ordinary but carefully selected and well trained soldiers. The higher the level of a given headquarters is, the more *spetsnaz* units it has at its disposal and the more professionals there are among the *spetsnaz* troops.

The term *spetsnaz* is a composite word made up from *spetsialnoye nakhazheniye*, meaning 'special purpose'. The name is well chosen. *Spetsnaz* differs from other forms of *razvedka* in that it not only seeks and finds important enemy targets, but in the majority of cases attacks and destroys them.

Spetsnaz has a long history, in which there have been periods of success and periods of decline. After the Second World War *spetsnaz* was in the doldrums, but from the mid-1950s a new era in the history of the organisation began with the West's new deployment of tactical nuclear weapons. This development created for the Soviet Army, which had always prepared itself, and still does, only for 'liberation' wars on foreign territory, a practically insuperable barrier. Soviet strategy could continue along the same lines only if the means could be found to remove Western tactical nuclear weapons from the path of the Soviet troops, without at the same time turning the enemy's territory into a nuclear desert.

The destruction of the tactical nuclear weapons which render Soviet aggression impossible or pointless could be carried out only if the whereabouts of all, or at least the majority, of the enemy's tactical nuclear weapons were established. But this in itself presented a tremendous problem. It is very easy to conceal tactical missiles, aircraft and nuclear artillery and, instead of deploying real missiles and guns, the enemy can deploy dummies, thus diverting the attention of Soviet *razvedka* and protecting the real tactical nuclear weapons under cover.

The Soviet high command therefore had to devise the sort of means of detection that could approach very close to the enemy's weapons and in each case provide a precise answer to the question of whether they were real, or just well produced dummies. But even if a tremendous number of nuclear batteries were discovered in good time, that did not solve the problem. In the time it takes for the transmission of

the reports from the reconnaissance units to the headquarters, for the analysis of the information obtained and the preparation of the appropriate command for action, the battery can have changed position several times. So forces had to be created that would be able to seek out, find and destroy immediately the nuclear weapons discovered in the course of war or immediately before its outbreak.

Spetsnaz was, and is, precisely such an instrument, permitting commanding officers at army level and higher to establish independently the whereabouts of the enemy's most dangerous weapons and to destroy them on the spot.

Is it possible for *spetsnaz* to pinpoint and destroy every single one of the enemy's nuclear weapons? Of course not. So what is the solution to this problem? It is very simple. *Spetsnaz* has to make every effort to find and destroy the enemy's nuclear armament. Nuclear strength represents the teeth of the state and it has to be knocked out with the first blow, possibly even before the fighting begins. But if it proves impossible to knock out all the teeth with the first blow, then a blow has to be struck not just at the teeth but at the brain and nervous system of the state.

When we speak of the 'brain' we mean the country's most important statesmen and politicians. In this context the leaders of the opposition parties are regarded as equally important candidates for destruction as the leaders of the party in power. The opposition is simply the state's reserve brain, and it would be silly to destroy the main decision-making system without putting the reserve system out of action. By the same token we mean, for example, the principal military leaders and police chiefs, the heads of the Church and trade unions and in general all the people who might at a critical moment appeal to the nation and who are well known to the nation.

By the 'nervous system' of the state we mean the principal centres and lines of government and military communications, and the commercial communications companies, including the main radio stations and television studios.

It would hardly be possible, of course, to destroy the brain, the nervous system and the teeth at once, but a simultaneous blow at all three of the most important organs could, in the opinion of the Soviet leaders, substantially reduce a nation's capacity for action in the event of war, especially at its initial and most critical stage. Some missiles will be destroyed and others will not be fired because there will be nobody to give the appropriate command or because the command will not be passed on in time due to the breakdown of communications.

Having within its sphere an organisation like *spetsnaz*, and having tested its potential on numerous exercises, the Soviet high command came to the conclusion that *spetsnaz* could be used with success not only against tactical but also against strategic nuclear installations: submarine bases, weapon stockpiles, aircraft bases and missile launching sites.

Spetsnaz could be used too, they realised, against the heart and blood supply of the state: ie. its source and distribution of energy — power stations, transformer stations and power lines, as well as oil and gas pipelines and storage points, pumping station and oil refineries. Putting even a few of the enemy's more important power stations out of action could present him with a catastrophic situation. Not only would there be no light: factories would be brought to a standstill, lifts would cease to work, the refrigeration installations would be useless, hospitals would find it almost impossible to function, blood stored in refrigerators would begin to coagulate, traffic lights, petrol pumps and trains would come to a halt, computers would cease to operate.

Even this short list must lead to the conclusion that Soviet military *razvedka* (the GRU) and its integral *spetsnaz* is something more than the 'eyes and ears of the Soviet Army'. As a special branch of the GRU *spetsnaz* is intended primarily for action in time of war and in the very last days and hours before it breaks out. But *spetsnaz* is

not idle in peacetime either. I am sometimes asked: if we are talking about terrorism on such a scale, we must be talking about the KGB. Not so. There are three good reasons why *spetsnaz* is a part of the GRU and not of the KGB. The first is that if the GRU and *spetsnaz* were to be removed from the Soviet Army and handed over to the KGB, it would be equivalent to blindfolding a strong man, while plugging his ears and depriving him of some other important organs, and making him fight with the information he needs for fighting provided by another person standing beside him and telling him the moves. The Soviet leaders have tried on more than one occasion to do this and it has always ended in catastrophe. The information provided by the secret police was always imprecise, late and insufficient, and the actions of a blind giant, predictably, were neither accurate or effective.

Secondly, if the functions of the GRU and *spetsnaz* were to be handed over to the KGB, then in the event of a catastrophe (inevitable in such a situation) any Soviet commanding officer or chief of staff could say that he had not had sufficient information about the enemy, that for example a vital aerodrome and a missile battery nearby had not been destroyed by the KGB's forces. These would be perfectly justified complaints, although it is in any case impossible to destroy every aerodrome, every missile battery and every command post because the supply of information in the course of battle is always insufficient. Any commanding officer who receives information about the enemy can think of a million supplementary questions to which there is no answer. There is only one way out of the situation, and that is to make every commanding officer responsible for gathering his own information about the enemy and to provide him with all the means for defeating his own enemy. Then, if the information is insufficient or some targets have not been destroyed, only he and his chief of staff are to blame. They must themselves organise the collection and interpretation of information about the enemy, so as to have, if not all the information, at least the most essential information at the right time. They must organise the operation of their forces so as to destroy the most important obstacles which the enemy has put in the way of their advance. This is the only way to ensure victory. The Soviet political leadership, the KGB and the military leaders have all had every opportunity to convince themselves that there is no other.

Thirdly, the Soviet secret police, the KGB, carries out different functions and has other priorities. It has its own terrorist apparatus, which includes an organisation very similar to *spetsnaz*, known as *osnaz*. The KGB uses *osnaz* for carrying out a range of tasks not dissimilar in many cases to those performed by the GRU's *spetsnaz*. But the Soviet leaders consider that it is best not to have any monopolies in the field of secret warfare. Competition, they feel, gives far better results than ration.

Osnaz is not a subject I propose to deal with in this book. Only a KGB officer directly connected with *osnaz* could describe what it is. My knowledge is very limited. But just as a book about Stalin would not be complete without some reference to Hitler, *osnaz* should not be overlooked here.

The term *osnaz* is usually met only in secret documents. In unclassified documents the term is written out in full as *osobogo nazhacheniya* or else reduced to the two letters 'ON'. In cases where a longer title is abbreviated the letters ON are run together with the preceding letters. For example, DON means 'division of *osnaz*', OON means a 'detachment of *osnaz*'.

The two words *osoby* and *spetsialny* are close in meaning but quite different words. In translation it is difficult to find a precise equivalent for these two words, which is why it is easier to use the terms *osnaz* and *spetsnaz* without translating them. *Osnaz* apparently came into being practically at the same time as the Communist dictatorship. In the very first moments of the existence of the Soviet regime we find references to detachments *osobogo nazhacheniya* — special purpose

detachments. *Osnaz* means military-terrorist units which came into being as shock troops of the Communist Party whose job was to defend the party. *Osnaz* was later handed over to the secret police, which changed its own name from time to time as easily as a snake changes its skin: Cheka — VCheka — OGPU — NKVD — NKGB — MGB — MVD — KGB. Once a snake, however, always a snake.

It is the fact the *spetsnaz* belongs to the army, and *osnaz* to the secret police, that accounts for all the differences between them. *Spetsnaz* operates mainly against external enemies; *osnaz* does the same but mainly in its own territory and against its own citizens. Even if both *spetsnaz* and *osnaz* are faced with carrying out one and the same operation the Soviet leadership is not inclined to rely so much on co-operation between the army and the secret police as on the strong competitive instincts between them.

Chapter 3. A History of *Spetsnaz*

In order to grasp the history behind *spetsnaz* it is useful to cast our minds back to the British Parliament in the time of Henry VIII. In 1516 a Member of the Parliament, Thomas More, published an excellent book entitled *Utopia*. In it he showed, simply and persuasively, that it was very easy to create a society in which universal justice reigned, but that the consequences of doing so would be terrible. More describes a society in which there is no private property and in which everything is controlled by the state. The state of Utopia is completely isolated from the outside world, as completely as the bureaucratic class rules the population. The supreme ruler is installed for his lifetime. The country itself, once a peninsula, has after monumental efforts on the part of the population and the army to build a deep canal dividing it from the rest of the world, become an island. Slavery has been introduced, but the rest of the population live no better than slaves. People do not have their own homes, with the result that anybody can at any time go into any home he wishes, a system which is worse even than the regulations in the Soviet Army today, in which the barracks of each company are open only to soldiers of that company.

In fact the system in Utopia begins to look more like that in a Soviet concentration camp. In Utopia, of course, it is laid down when people are to rise (at four o'clock in the morning), when they are to go to bed and how many minutes' rest they may have. Every day starts with public lectures. People must travel on a group passport, signed by the Mayor, and if they are caught without a passport outside their own district they are severely punished as deserters. Everybody keeps a close watch on his neighbour: 'Everyone has his eye on you.'

With fine English humour Thomas More describes the ways in which Utopia wages war. The whole population of Utopia, men and women, are trained to fight. Utopia wages only just wars in self-defence and, of course, for the liberation of other peoples. The people of Utopia consider it their right and their duty to establish a similarly just regime in neighbouring countries. Many of the surrounding countries have already been liberated and are now ruled, not by local leaders, but by administrators from Utopia. The liberation of the other peoples is carried out in the name of humanism. But Thomas More does not explain to us what this 'humanism' is. Utopia's allies, in receipt of military aid from her, turn the populations of the neighbouring states into slaves.

Utopia provokes conflicts and contradictions in the countries which have not yet been liberated. If someone in such a country speaks out in favour of capitulating to Utopia he can expect a big reward later. But anyone who calls upon the people to fight

Utopia can expect only slavery or death, with his property split up and distributed to those who capitulate and collaborate.

On the outbreak of war Utopia's agents in the enemy country post up in prominent places announcements concerning the reward to be paid to anyone killing the king. It is a tremendous sum of money. There is also a list of other people for whose murder large sums of money will be paid.

The direct result of these measures is that universal suspicion reigns in the enemy country.

Thomas More describes only one of the stratagems employed, but it is the most important:

When the battle is at its height a group of specially selected young men, who have sworn to stick together, try to knock out the enemy general. They keep hammering away at him by every possible method — frontal attacks, ambushes, long-range archery, hand-to-hand combat. They bear down on him in a long, unbroken wedge-formation, the point of which is constantly renewed as tired men are replaced by fresh ones. As a result the general is nearly always killed or taken prisoner — unless he saves his skin by running away.

It is the groups of 'specially selected young men' that I want to discuss in this book.

Four hundred years after the appearance of Utopia the frightful predictions of that wise Englishman became a reality in Russia. A successful attempt was made to create a society of universal justice. I had read Thomas More's frightening forecasts when I was still a child and I was amazed at the staggering realism with which Utopia was described and how strikingly similar it was to the Soviet Union: a place where all the towns looked like each other, people knew nothing about what was happening abroad or about fashion in clothes (everybody being dressed more or less the same), and so forth. More even described the situation of people 'who think differently'. In Utopia, he said, 'It is illegal for any such person to argue in defence of his beliefs.'

The Soviet Union is actually a very mild version of Utopia — a sort of 'Utopia with a human face'. A person can travel in the Soviet Union without having an internal passport, and Soviet bureaucrats do not yet have such power over the family as their Utopia counterparts who added up the number of men and women in each household and, if they exceeded the number permitted, simply transferred the superfluous members to another house or even another town where there was a shortage of them.

The Communists genuinely have a great deal left to do before they bring society down to the level of Utopia. But much has already been done, especially in the military sphere, and in particular in the creation of 'specially selected groups of young men'.

It is interesting to note that such groups were formed even before the Red Army existed, before the Red Guard, and even before the Revolution. The origins of *spetsnaz* are to be found in the revolutionary terrorism of the nineteenth century, when numerous groups of young people were ready to commit murder, or possibly suicide, in the cause of creating a society in which everything would be divided equally between everybody. As they went about murdering others or getting killed themselves they failed to understand one simple truth: that in order to create a just society you

had to create a control mechanism. The juster the society one wants to build the more complete must be the control over production and consumption.

Many of the first leaders of the Red Army had been terrorists in the past, before the Revolution. For example, one of the outstanding organisers of the Red Army, Mikhail Frunze, after whom the principal Soviet military academy is named, had twice been sentenced to death before the Revolution. At the time it was by no means easy to get two death sentences. For organising a party which aimed at the overthrow of the existing regime by force, Lenin received only three years of deportation in which he lived well and comfortably and spent his time shooting, fishing and openly preaching revolution. And the woman terrorist Vera Zasulich, who murdered a provincial governor was acquitted by a Russian court. The court was independent of the state and reckoned that, if she had killed for political reasons, it meant that she had been prompted by her conscience and her beliefs and that her acts could not be regarded as a crime. In this climate Mikhail Frunze had managed to receive two death sentences. Neither of them was carried out, naturally. On both occasions the sentence was commuted to deportation, from which he had no great difficulty in escaping. It was while he was in exile that Frunze organised a circle of like-minded people which was called the 'Military Academy': a real school for terrorists, which drew up the first strategy to be followed up by armed detachments of Communists in the event of an uprising.

The seizure of power by the Bolsheviks demonstrated, primarily to the revolutionaries themselves, that it was possible to neutralise a vast country and then to bring it under control simply and quickly. What was needed were 'groups of specially selected young men' capable of putting out of action the government, the postal services, the telegraph and telephone, and the railway terminals and bridges in the capital. Paralysis at the centre meant that counteraction on the outskirts was split up. Outlying areas could be dealt with later one at a time.

Frunze was undoubtedly a brilliant theoretician and practitioner of the art of war, including partisan warfare and terrorism. During the Civil War he commanded an army and a number of fronts. After Trotsky's dismissal he took over as People's Commissar for military and naval affairs. During the war he reorganised the large but badly led partisan formations into regular divisions and armies which were subordinated to the strict centralised administration. At the same time, while commanding those formations, he kept sending relatively small but very reliable mobile units to fight in the enemy's rear.

The Civil War was fought over vast areas, a war of movement without a continuous stable front and with an enormous number of all sorts of armies, groups, independent detachments and bands. It was a partisan war in spirit and in content. Armies developed out of small, scattered detachments, and whenever they were defeated they were able to disintegrate into a large number of independent units which carried on the war on a partisan scale.

But we are not concerned here with the partisan war as a whole, only with the fighting units of the regular Red Army specially created for operating in the enemy's rear. Such units existed on various fronts and armies. They were not known as *spetsnaz*, but this did not alter their essential nature, and it was not just Frunze who appreciated the importance of being able to use regular units in the rear of the enemy. Trotsky, Stalin, Voroshilov, Tukhachevsky, *inter alia*, supported the strategy and made extensive use of it.

Revolutionary war against the capitalist powers started immediately after the Bolsheviks seized power. As the Red Army 'liberated' fresh territory and arrived at the frontiers with other countries the amount of subversion directed against them increased. The end of the Civil War did not mean the end of the secret war being

waged by the Communists against their neighbours. On the contrary, it was stepped up, because, once the Civil War was over, forces were released for other kinds of warfare.

Germany was the first target for revolution. It is interesting to recall that, as early as December 1917, a Communist newspaper *Die Fackel*, was being published in Petrograd with a circulation of 500,000 copies. In January 1918 a Communist group called 'Spartak' emerged in the same place. In April 1918 another newspaper *Die Weltrevolution*, began to appear. And finally, in August 1919, the famous paper of the German Communists, *Die Rote Fahne*, was founded in Moscow.

At the same time as the first Communist groups appeared, steps were taken to train terrorist fighting units of German Communists. These units were used for suppressing the anti-Communist resistance put up by Russian and Ukrainian peasants. Then, in 1920, all the units of German Communists were gathered together in the rear of the Red Army on the Western front. That was when the Red Army was preparing for a breakthrough across Poland and into Germany. The Red Army's official marching song, 'Budenny's March', included these words: 'We're taking Warsaw — Take Berlin too!'

In that year the Bolsheviks did not succeed in organising revolution in Germany or even in 'liberating' Poland. At the time Soviet Russia was devastated by the First World War and by the far more terrible Civil War. Famine, typhus and destruction raged across the country. But in 1923 another attempt was made to provoke a revolution in Germany. Trotsky himself demanded in September 1923 to be relieved of all his Party and Government posts and to be sent as an ordinary soldier to the barricades of the German Revolution. The party did not send Trotsky there, but sent other Soviet Communist leaders, among them, Iosef Unshlikht. At the time he was deputy chairman of the Cheka secret police. Now he was appointed deputy head of the 'registration administration', now known as the GRU or military intelligence, and it was in this position that he was sent illegally to Germany. 'Unshlikht was given the task of organising the detachments which were to carry out the armed uprising and coup d'état, recruiting them and providing them with weapons. He also had the job of organising a German Cheka for the extermination of the bourgeoisie and opponents of the Revolution after the transfer of power.... This was how the planned Revolution was planned to take place. On the occasion of the anniversary of the Russian October Revolution the working masses were to come out on the streets for mass demonstrations. Unshlikht's «Red hundreds» were to provoke clashes with the police so as to cause bloodshed and more serious conflicts, to inflame the workers' indignation and carry out a general working-class uprising.'¹

¹ B. Bazhanov: 'Memoirs of a Secretary to Stalin', pub. *Tretya volna* 1980, pp 67-69.

In view of the instability of German Society at that time, the absence of a powerful army, the widespread discontent and the frequent outbursts of violence, especially in 1923, the plan might have been realised. Many experts are inclined to the view that Germany really was close to revolution. Soviet military intelligence and its terrorist units led by Unshlikht were expected to do no more than put the spark to the powder keg.

There were many reasons why the plans came to nothing. But there were two especially important ones: the absence of a common frontier between the USSR and Germany, and the split in the German Communist Party. The lack of a common frontier was at the time a serious obstacle to the penetration into Germany of

substantial forces of Soviet subversives. Stalin understood this very well, and he was always fighting to have Poland crushed so that common frontiers could be established with Germany. When he succeeded in doing this in 1939, it was a risky step, since a common frontier with Germany meant that Germany could attack the USSR without warning, as indeed happened two years later. But without a common frontier Stalin could not get into Europe.

The split in the German Communist Party was an equally serious hindrance to the carrying out of Soviet plans. One group pursued policy, subservient to the Comintern and consequently to the Soviet Politburo, while the other pursued an antagonistic one. Zinoviev was 'extremely displeased by this and he raised the question in the Politburo of presenting Maslov *one of the dissenting German Communist leaders* with an ultimatum: either he would take a large sum of money, leave the party and get out of Germany, or Unshlikht would be given orders to liquidate him.'²

² Ibid. p. 68

At the same time as preparations were being made for revolution in Germany preparations were also going ahead for revolutions in other countries. For example, in September 1923, groups of terrorists trained in the USSR (of both Bulgarian and Soviet nationality) started causing disturbances in Bulgaria which could very well have developed into a state of general chaos and bloodletting. But the 'revolution' was suppressed and its ringleaders escaped to the Soviet Union. Eighteen months later, in April 1925, the attempt was repeated. This time unknown persons caused a tremendous explosion in the main cathedral in Sofia in the hope of killing the king and the whole government. Boris III had a miraculous escape, but attempts to destabilise Bulgaria by acts of terrorism continued until 1944, when the Red Army at last entered Bulgaria. Another miracle then seemed to take place, because from that moment on nobody has tried to shoot the Bulgarian rulers and no one has let off any bombs. The terror did continue, but it was aimed at the population of the country as a whole rather than the rulers. And then Bulgarian terrorism spread beyond the frontiers of the country and appeared on the streets of Western Europe.

The campaign of terrorism against Finland is closely linked with the name of the Finnish Communist Otto Kuusinen who was one of the leaders of the Communist revolt in Finland in 1918. After the defeat of the 'revolution' he escaped to Moscow and later returned to Finland for underground work. In 1921 he again fled to Moscow to save himself from arrest. From that moment Kuusinen's career was closely linked with Soviet military intelligence officers. Kuusinen had an official post and did the same work: preparing for the overthrow of democracy in Finland and other countries. In his secret career Kuusinen had some notable successes. In the mid-1930s he rose to be deputy head of *Razvedupr* as the GRU was known then. Under Kuusinen's direction an effective espionage network was organised in the Scandinavian countries, and at the same time he directed the training of military units which were to carry out acts of terrorism in those countries. As early as the summer of 1918 an officer school was founded in Petrograd to train men for the 'Red Army of Finland'. This school later trained officers for other 'Red Armies' and became the International Military School — an institute of higher education for terrorists.

After the Civil War was over Kuusinen insisted on carrying on underground warfare on Finnish territory and keeping the best units of Finnish Communists in existence. In 1939, after the Red Army invaded Finland, he proclaimed himself 'prime minister and

minister of foreign affairs' of the 'Finnish Democratic Republic'. The 'government' included Mauri Rosenberg (from the GRU) as 'deputy prime minister', Axel Antila as 'minister of defence' and the NKVD interrogator Tuure Lekhen as 'minister of internal affairs'. But the Finnish people put up such resistance that the Kuusinen government's bid to turn Finland into a 'people's republic' was a failure.

(A curious fact of history must be mentioned here. When the Finnish Communists formed their government on Soviet territory and started a war against their own country, voluntary formations of Russians were formed in Finland which went into battle against both the Soviet and the Finnish Communists. A notable member of these genuinely voluntary units was Boris Bazhanov, formerly Stalin's personal secretary, who had fled to the West.)

Otto Kuusinen's unsuccessful attempt to become the ruler of Communist Finland did not bring his career to an end. He continued it with success, first in the GRU and later in the Department of Administrative Organs of the Central Committee of the CPSU — the body that supervises all the espionage and terrorist institutions in the Soviet Union, as well as the prisons, concentration camps, courts and so forth. From 1957 until his death in 1964 Kuusinen was one of the most powerful leaders in the Soviet Union, serving simultaneously as a member of the Politburo and a Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party. In the Khodynki district of Moscow, where the GRU has its headquarters, one of the bigger streets is called Otto Kuusinen Street.

In the course of the Civil War and after it, Polish units, too, were formed and went into action on Soviet territory. One example was the 1st Revolutionary Regiment, 'Red Warsaw', which was used for putting down anti-Communist revolts in Moscow, Tambov and Yaroslavl. For suppressing anti-Communist revolts by the Russian population the Communists used a Yugoslav regiment, a Czechoslovak regiment, and many other formations, including Hungarians, Rumanians, Austrians and others. After the Civil War all these formations provided a base for the recruitment of spies and for setting up subversive combat detachments for operating on the territory of capitalist states. For example, a group of Hungarian Communist terrorists led by Ferenc Kryug, fought against Russian peasants in the Civil War; in the Second World War Kryug led a special purpose group operating in Hungary.

Apart from the 'internationalist' fighters, i.e. people of foreign extraction, detachments were organised in the Soviet Union for operating abroad which were composed entirely, or very largely, of Soviet citizens. A bitter battle was fought between the army commanders and the secret police for control of these detachments.

On 2 August 1930 a small detachment of commando troops was dropped in the region of Voronezh and was supposed during the manoeuvres to carry out operations in the rear of the 'enemy'. Officially this is the date when Soviet airborne troops came into being. But it is also the date when *spetsnaz* was born. Airborne troops and *spetsnaz* troops subsequently went through a parallel development. At certain points in its history *spetsnaz* passed out of the control of military intelligence into the hands of the airborne forces, at others the airborne troops exercised administrative control while military intelligence had operational control. But in the end it was reckoned to be more expedient to hand *spetsnaz* over entirely to military intelligence. The progress of *spetsnaz* over the following thirty years cannot be studied in isolation from the development of the airborne forces.

1930 marked the beginning of a serious preoccupation with parachute troops in the USSR. In 1931 separate detachments of parachutists were made into battalions and a little later into regiments. In 1933 an *osnaz* brigade was formed in the Leningrad military district. It included a battalion of parachutists, a battalion of mechanised infantry, a battalion of artillery and three squadrons of aircraft. However, it turned out

to be of little use to the Army, because it was not only too large and too awkward to manage, but also under the authority of the NKVD rather than the GRU. After a long dispute this brigade and several others created on the same pattern were reorganised into airborne brigades and handed over entirely to the Army.

To begin with, the airborne forces or VDV consisted of transport aircraft, airborne regiments and brigades, squadrons of heavy bombers and separate reconnaissance units. It is these reconnaissance units that are of interest to us. How many there were of them and how many men they included is not known. There is fragmentary information about their tactics and training. But it is known, for example, that one of the training schools was situated in Kiev. It was a secret school and operated under the disguise of a parachute club, while being completely under the control of the *Razvedupr* (GRU). It included a lot of women. In the course of the numerous manoeuvres that were held, the reconnaissance units were dropped in the rear of the 'enemy' and made attacks on his command points, headquarters, centres and lines of communications. It is known that terrorist techniques were already well advanced. For example, a mine had been developed for blowing up railway bridges as trains passed over them. However, bridges are always especially well guarded, so the experts of the *Razvedupr* and the Engineering Directorate of the Red Army produced a mine that could be laid on the tracks several kilometres away from the bridge. A passing train would pick up the mine which would detonate at the very moment when the train was on the bridge.

To give some idea of the scale of the VDV, on manoeuvres in 1934 900 men were dropped simultaneously by parachute. At the famous Kiev manoeuvres in 1935 no less than 1188 airborne troops were dropped at once, followed by a normal landing of 1765 men with light tanks, armoured cars and artillery. In Belorussia in 1936 there was an air drop of 1800 troops and a landing of 5700 men with heavy weapons. In the Moscow military district in the same year the whole of the 84th rifle division was transferred from one place to another by air. Large-scale and well armed airborne attacks were always accompanied by the dropping in neighbouring districts of commando units which operated both in the interests of the security of the major force and in the interests of *Razvedupr*.

In 1938 the Soviet Union had six airborne brigades with a total of 18,000 men. This figure is, however, deceptive, since the strength of the 'separate reconnaissance units' is not known, nor are they included in that figure. Parachutists were also not trained by the Red Army alone but by 'civilian' clubs. In 1934 these clubs had 400 parachute towers from which members made up to half a million jumps, adding to their experience by jumps from planes and balloons. Many Western experts reckon that the Soviet Union entered the Second World War with a million trained parachutists, who could be used both as airborne troops and in special units — in the language of today, in *spetsnaz*.

A continual, hotly contested struggle was going on in the General Staff of the Red Army. On what territory were the special detachments to operate — on the enemy's territory, or on Soviet territory when it was occupied by the enemy?

For a long time the two policies existed side by side. Detachments were trained to operate both on home territory and enemy territory as part of the preparations to meet the enemy in the Western regions of the Soviet Union. These were carried out very seriously. First of all large partisan units were formed, made up of carefully screened and selected soldiers. The partisans went on living in the towns and villages, but went through their regular military training and were ready at any moment to take

off into the forests. The units were only the basis upon which to develop much larger-scale partisan warfare. In peacetime they were made up largely of leaders and specialists; in the course of the fighting each unit was expected to expand into a huge formation consisting of several thousand men. For these formations hiding places were prepared in secluded locations and stocked with weapons, ammunition, means of communications and other necessary equipment.

Apart from the partisans who were to take to the forests a vast network of reconnaissance and commando troops was prepared. The local inhabitants were trained to carry out reconnaissance and terrorist operations and, if the enemy arrived, they were supposed to remain in place and pretend to submit to the enemy, and even work for him. These networks were supposed later to organise a fierce campaign of terror inside the enemy garrisons. To make it easier for the partisans and the terrorists to operate, secret communication networks and supplies were set up in peacetime, along with secret meeting places, underground hospitals, command posts and even arms factories.

To make it easier for the partisans to operate on their own territory a 'destruction zone' was created, also known as a 'death strip'. This was a strip running the length of the Western frontiers of the Soviet Union between 100 and 250 kilometres wide. Within that strip *all* bridges, railway depots, tunnels, water storage tanks and electric power stations were prepared for destruction by explosive. Also in peacetime major embankments on railway lines and highways and cuttings through which the roads passed were made ready for blowing up. Means of communication, telephone lines, even the permanent way, all were prepared for destruction.

Immediately behind the 'death strip' came the 'Stalin Line' of exceptionally well fortified defences. The General Staff's idea was that the enemy should be exhausted in the 'death strip' on the vast minefields and huge obstacles and then get stuck on the line of fortifications. At the same time the partisans would be constantly attacking him in the rear.

It was a magnificent defence system. Bearing in mind the vast territories involved and the poor network of roads, such a system could well have made the whole of Soviet territory practically impassable for an enemy. But — in 1939 the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact was signed.

The Pact was the signal for a tremendous expansion of Soviet military strength. Everything connected with defence was destroyed, while everything connected with offensive actions was expanded at a great rate, particularly Soviet sabotage troops and the airborne troops connected with them. In April 1941 five airborne corps were formed. All five were in the first strategic echelon of the Red Army, three facing Germany and two facing Rumania. The latter were more dangerous for Germany than the other three, because the dropping of even one airborne corps in Rumania and the cutting off, even temporarily, of supplies of oil to Germany meant the end of the war for the Germans.

Five airborne corps in 1941 was more than there were in all the other countries of the world together. But this was not enough for Stalin. There was a plan to create another five airborne corps, and the plan was carried out in August and September 1941. But in a defensive war Stalin did not, of course, need either the first five or the second five. Any discussion of Stalin's 'defence plans' must first of all explain how five airborne corps, let alone ten, could be used in a defensive war.

In a war on one's own territory it is far easier during a temporary retreat to leave partisan forces or even complete fighting formations hidden on the ground than it is to drop them in later by parachute. But Stalin had destroyed such formations, from which one can draw only one conclusion; Stalin had prepared the airborne corps specifically for dropping on other people's territory.

At the same time as the rapid expansion of the airborne forces there was an equally rapid growth of the special reconnaissance units intended for operations on enemy territory.

The great British strategist and historian B. H. Liddell Hart, dealing with this period, speaks of Hitler's fears concerning Stalin's intentions, referring to 'a fatal attack in the back from Russia'.³ And moves by the Soviet Union in June 1940 did evoke particular nervousness in the German high command. Germany had thrown all her forces against France at that time, and the Soviet Union rushed troops into the Baltic states and Bessarabia. The airborne troops especially distinguished themselves. In June 1940 the 214th Soviet airborne brigade was dropped with the idea of seizing a group of aerodromes in the region of Shauliai in Lithuania, under a hundred kilometres from the East Prussian border. In the same month the 201st and 204th airborne brigades were dropped in Bessarabia to capture the towns of Ismail and Belgrad-Dnestrovsky. This was close by the Ploesti oilfields. What would Stalin do if the German Army advanced further into North Africa and the British Isles?

³ *Strategy. The Indirect Approach*, p.241.

It is easy to understand why Hitler took the decision in that next month, July 1940, to prepare for war against the USSR. It was quite impossible for him to move off the continent of Europe and into the British Isles or Africa, leaving Stalin with his huge army and terrifying airborne forces which were of no use to him for anything but a large-scale offensive.

Hitler guessed rightly what Stalin's plans were, as is apparent from his letter to Mussolini of 21 June 1941.⁴ Can we believe Hitler? In this case we probably can. The letter was not intended for publication and was never published in Hitler's lifetime. It is interesting in that it repeats the thought that Stalin had voiced at a secret meeting of the Central Committee. Moreover, in his speech at the 18th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party Stalin had had this to say about Britain and France; In their policy of nonintervention can be detected an attempt and a desire not to prevent the aggressors from doing their dirty work... not to prevent, let us say, Germany getting bogged down in European affairs and involved in a war... to let all the participants in the war get stuck deep in the mud of battle, to encourage them to do this on the quiet, to let them weaken and exhaust each other, and then, when they are sufficiently weakened, to enter the arena with fresh forces, acting of course «in the interests of peace», and to dictate their own conditions to the crippled participants in the war.⁵ Once again, he was attributing to others motives which impelled him in his ambitions. Stalin wanted Europe to exhaust itself. And Hitler understood that. But he understood too late. He should have understood before the Pact was signed.

⁴ 'I cannot take responsibility for the waiting any longer, because I cannot see any way that the danger will disappear.... The concentration of Soviet force is enormous.... All available Soviet armed forces are now on our border.... It is quite possible that Russia will try to destroy the Rumanian oilfields.'

⁵ *Pravda*, 11 March 1939.

However, Hitler still managed to upset Stalin's plans by starting the war first. The huge Soviet forces intended for the 'liberation' of Russia's neighbours were quite

unnecessary in the war of defence against Germany. The airborne corps were used as ordinary infantry against the advancing German tanks. The many units and groups of airborne troops and commandos were forced to retreat or to dig trenches to halt the advancing German troops. The airborne troops trained for operations in the territory of foreign countries were able to be used in the enemy's rear, but not in his territory so much as in Soviet territory occupied by the German army.

The reshaping of the whole philosophy of the Red Army, which had been taught to conduct an offensive war on other people's territory, was very painful but relatively short. Six months later the Red Army had learnt to defend itself and in another year it had gone over to offensive operations. From that moment everything fell into place and the Red Army, created only for offensive operations, became once again victorious.

The process of reorganising the armed forces for operations on its own territory affected all branches of the services, including the special forces. At the beginning of 1942 thirteen guards battalions⁶ of *spetsnaz* were organised in the Red Army for operations in the enemy's rear, as well as one guards engineering brigade of *spetsnaz*, consisting of five battalions. The number of separate battalions corresponded exactly to the number of fighting fronts. Each front received one such battalion under its command. A guards brigade of *spetsnaz* remained at the disposal of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, to be used only with Stalin's personal permission in the most crucial locations.

⁶ In the Soviet Army the title of 'guards' can be won only in battle, the only exceptions being certain formations which were awarded the title when they were being formed. These included *spetsnaz* detachments.

So as not to reveal the real name of *spetsnaz*, the independent guards battalion and the brigade were given the code name of 'guards minelayers'. Only a very limited circle of people knew what the name concealed.

A special *razvedka* department was set up in the Intelligence directorate of each front to direct the work of the 'guards minelayers'. Each department had at its disposal a battalion of *spetsnaz*. Later the special *razvedka* departments began recruiting *spetsnaz* agents in territories occupied by the enemy. These agents were intended for providing support for the 'minelayers' when they appeared in the enemy rear. Subsequently each special *razvedka* department was provided with a reconnaissance point of *spetsnaz* to recruit agents.

The guards brigade of *spetsnaz* was headed by one of the outstanding Soviet practitioners of fighting in the rear of the enemy — Colonel (later Lieutenant-General) Moshe Ioffe.

The number of *spetsnaz* increased very quickly. In unclassified Soviet writings we come across references to the 16th and the 33rd engineering brigade of *spetsnaz*. Apart from detachments operating behind the enemy's lines, other *spetsnaz* units were formed for different purposes: for example, radio battalions for destroying the enemy's radio links, spreading disinformation and tracing the whereabouts of enemy headquarters and communication centres so as to facilitate the work of the *spetsnaz* terrorist formations. It is known that from 1942 there existed the 130th, 131st, 132nd and 226th independent radio battalions of *spetsnaz*.

The operations carried out by the 'minelayers' were distinguished by their daring character and their effectiveness. They usually turned up behind the enemy's lines in small groups. Sometimes they operated independently, at others they combined their operations with the partisans. These joint operations always benefited both the

partisans and *spetsnaz*. The minelayers taught the partisans the most difficult aspects of minelaying, the most complicated technology and the most advanced tactics. When they were with the partisans they had a reliable hiding place, protection while they carried out their operation, and medical and other aid in case of need. The partisans knew the area well and could serve as guides. It was an excellent combination: the local partisans who knew every tree in the forest, and the first-class technical equipment for the use of explosives demonstrated by real experts.

The 'guards minelayers' usually came on the scene for a short while, did their work swiftly and well and then returned whence they had come. The principal way of transporting them behind the enemy's lines was to drop them by parachute. Their return was carried out by aircraft using secret partisan airfields, or they made their way by foot across the enemy's front line.

The high point in the partisan war against Germany consisted of two operations carried out in 1943. By that time, as a result of action by *osnaz*, order had been introduced into the partisan movement; it had been 'purged' and brought under rigid central control. As a result of *spetsnaz* work the partisan movement had been taught the latest methods of warfare and the most advanced techniques of sabotage.

The operation known as the 'War of the Rails' was carried out over six weeks from August to September 1943. It was a very fortunate time to have chosen. It was at that moment when the Soviet forces, having exhausted the German army in defensive battles at Kursk, themselves suddenly went over to the offensive. To support the advance a huge operation was undertaken in the rear of the enemy with the object of paralysing his supply routes, preventing him from bringing up ammunition and fuel for the troops, and making it impossible for him to move his reserves around. The operation involved the participation of 167 partisan units with a total strength of 100,000 men. All the units of *spetsnaz* were sent behind the enemy lines to help the partisans. More than 150 tons of explosives, more than 150 kilometres of wire and over half a million detonators were transported to the partisan units by air. The *spetsnaz* units were instructed to maintain a strict watch over the fulfilment of their tasks. Most of them operated independently in the most dangerous and important places, and they also appointed men from their units to instruct the partisan units in the use of explosives.

Operation 'War of the Rails' was carried out simultaneously in a territory with a front more than 1000 kilometres wide and more than 500 kilometres in depth. On the first night of the operation 42,000 explosions took place on the railway lines, and the partisan activity increased with every night that passed. The German high command threw in tremendous forces to defend their lines of communication, so that every night could be heard not only the sound of bridges and railway lines being blown up but also the sounds of battle with the German forces as the partisans fought their way through to whatever they had to destroy. Altogether, in the course of the operation 215,000 rails, 836 complete trains, 184 rail and 556 road bridges were blown up. A vast quantity of enemy equipment and ammunition was also destroyed.

Having won the enormous battle at Kursk, the Red Army sped towards the river Dnieper and crossed it in several places. A second large-scale operation in support of the advancing troops was carried out in the enemy's rear under the name of 'Concert', which was in concept and spirit a continuation of the 'War of the Rails'. In the final stage of that operation all the *spetsnaz* units were taken off to new areas and were enabled to rest along with the partisan formations which had not taken part in it. Now their time had come. Operation 'Concert' began on 19 September 1943. That night in Belorussia alone 19,903 rails were blown up. On the night of 25 September 15,809 rails were destroyed. All the *spetsnaz* units and 193 partisan units took part in the operation 'Concert'. The total number of participants in the operation exceeded

120,000. In the course of the whole operation, which went on until the end of October, 148,557 rails were destroyed, several hundred trains with troops, weapons and ammunition were derailed, and hundreds of bridges were blown up. Despite a shortage of explosives and other material needed for such work, on the eve of the operation only eighty tons of explosives could be sent to the partisan. Nevertheless 'Concert' was a tremendous success.

After the Red Army moved into the territory of neighbouring states *spetsnaz* went through a radical reorganisation. The independent reconnaissance units, the reconnaissance posts which recruited agents for terrorist actions, and the independent radio battalions for conducting disinformation, were all retained in their entirety. There are plenty of references in the Soviet military press to operations by special intelligence units in the final stages of the war. For example, in the course of an operation in the Vistula-Oder area special groups from the Intelligence directorate of the headquarters of the 1st Ukrainian Front established the scope of the network of aerodromes and the exact position of the enemy's air bases, found the headquarters of the 4th Tank Army and the 17th Army, the 48th Tank Corps and the 42nd Army Corps, and also gathered a great deal of other very necessary information.

The detachments of 'guards minelayers' of *spetsnaz* were reformed, however, into regular guards sapper detachments and were used in that form until the end of the war. Only a relatively small number of 'guards minelayers' were kept in being and used behind the enemy lines in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Such a decision was absolutely right for the times. The main targets for *spetsnaz* operations had been the enemy's lines of communication. But that had been before the Red Army had started to advance at great speed. When that happened, there was no longer any need to blow up bridges. They needed to be captured and preserved, not destroyed. For this work the Red Army had separate shock brigades of motorised guards engineering troops which, operating jointly with the forward units, would capture especially important buildings and other objects, clear them of mines and defend them until the main force arrived. The guards formations of *spetsnaz* were used mainly for strengthening these special engineering brigades. Some of the surviving guards battalions of *spetsnaz* were transferred to the Far East where, in August 1945, they were used against the Japanese Army.

The use of *spetsnaz* in the Manchurian offensive of 1945 is of special interest, because it provides the best illustration of what was supposed to happen to Germany if she had not attacked the USSR.

Japan had a peace treaty with the Soviet Union. But Japan had gone to war with other states and had exhausted her military, economic and other resources. Japan had seized vast territories inhabited by hundreds of millions of people who wanted to be liberated and were ready to welcome and support any liberator who came along. Japan was in exactly the situation in which Stalin had wanted to see Germany: exhausted by war with other countries, and with troops scattered over expansive territories the populations of which hated the sight of them.

Thus, in the interests naturally of peace and humanity Stalin struck a sudden crushing blow at the armed forces of Japan in Manchuria and China, violating the treaty signed four years earlier. The operation took place over vast areas. In terms of the distances covered and the speed at which it moved, this operation has no equal in world history. Soviet troops operated over territories 5000 kilometres in width and 600-800 kilometres in depth. More than a million and a half soldiers took part in the operation, with over 5000 tanks and nearly 4000 aircraft. It really was a lightning operation, in the course of which 84,000 Japanese officers and men were killed and 593,000 taken prisoner. A tremendous quantity of arms, ammunition and other equipment was seized.

It may be objected that Japan was already on the brink of catastrophe. That is true. But therein lies Soviet strategy: to remain neutral until such time as the enemy exhausts himself in battle against someone else, and then to strike a sudden blow. That is precisely how the war against Germany was planned and that was why the partisan units, the barriers and defensive installations were all dispensed with, and why the ten airborne corps were created in 1941.

In the Manchurian offensive the *spetsnaz* detachments put up their best performance. Twenty airborne landings were made not by airborne troops, but by special reconnaissance troops. *Spetsnaz* units of the Pacific Fleet were landed from submarines and surface boats. Some *spetsnaz* units crossed the frontier by foot, captured Japanese cars and used them for their operations. Worried about the railway tunnels on a strip of the 1st Far Eastern front, the Soviet high command created special units for capturing the tunnels. The groups crossed the frontier secretly, cut the throats of the guards, severed the wires connected to the explosive charges, and put the detonators out of action. They then held the tunnels until their own forces arrived.

In the course of the offensive a new and very risky type of operation was employed by *spetsnaz*. Senior GRU officers, with the rank of colonel or even major-general, were put in charge of small groups. Such a group would suddenly land on an airfield close to an important Japanese headquarters. The appearance of a Soviet colonel or general deep in the Japanese rear never failed to provoke astonished reactions from both the Japanese high command and the Japanese troops, as well as from the local population. The transport planes carrying these were escorted by Soviet fighter aircraft, but the fighters were soon obliged to return to their bases, leaving the Soviet transport undefended until it landed. Even after it landed it had at best only one high-ranking officer, the crew and no more than a platoon of soldiers to guard over the plane. The Soviet officer would demand and usually obtain a meeting with a Japanese general, at which he would demand the surrender of the Japanese garrison. He and his group really had nothing to back them up: Soviet troops were still hundreds of kilometres away and it was still weeks to the end of the war. But the local Japanese military leaders (and the Soviet officers too, for that matter) naturally did not realise this. Perhaps the Emperor had decided to fight on to the last man....

In several recorded instances, senior Japanese military leaders decided independently to surrender without having permission to do so from their superiors. The improvement in the morale and position of the Soviet troops can be imagined.

After the end of the Second World War *spetsnaz* practically ceased to exist for several years. Its reorganisation was eventually carried out under the direction of several generals who were fanatically devoted to the idea of *spetsnaz*. One of them was Viktor Kondratevich Kharchenko, who is quite rightly regarded as the 'father' of the modern *spetsnaz*. Kharchenko was an outstanding sportsman and expert in the theory and practice of the use of explosives. In 1938 he graduated from the military electrotechnical academy which, apart from training specialists in communications, at that time also produced experts in the business of applying the most complicated way of blowing up buildings and other objectives. During the war he was chief of staff of the directorate of special works on the Western front. From May 1942 he was chief of staff on the independent guards *spetsnaz* brigade, and from June he was deputy commander of that brigade. In July 1944 his brigade was reorganised into an independent guards motorised engineering brigade.

Kharchenko was working in the General Staff after the war when he wrote a letter to Stalin, the basic point of which was: 'If before the outbreak of war our sportsmen who made up the *spetsnaz* units spent some time in Germany, Finland, Poland and other countries, they could be used in wartime in enemy territory with greater likelihood of success.' Many specialists in the Soviet Union now believe that Stalin put an end to the Soviet Union's self-imposed isolation in sport partly because of the effect Kharchenko's letter had on him.

In 1948 Kharchenko completed his studies at the Academy of the General Staff. From 1951 he headed the scientific research institute of the engineering troops. Under his direction major researches and experiments were carried out in an effort to develop new engineering equipment and armaments, especially for small detachments of saboteurs operating behind the enemy's lines.

In the immediate postwar years Kharchenko strove to demonstrate at the very highest level the necessity for reconstructing *spetsnaz* on a new technical level. He had a great many opponents. So then he decided not to argue any more. He selected a group of sportsmen from among the students at the engineering academy, succeeded in interesting them in his idea, and trained them personally for carrying out very difficult tasks. During manoeuvres held at the Totskyie camps, when on Marshal Zhukov's instructions a real nuclear explosion was carried out, and then the behaviour of the troops in conditions extremely close to real warfare was studied, Kharchenko decided to deploy his own group of men at his own risk.

The discussions that took place after the manoeuvres were, the senior officers all agreed, instructive — all except General Kharchenko. He pointed out that in circumstances of actual warfare nothing of what they had been discussing would have taken place because, he said, a small group of trained people had been close to where the nuclear charges had been stored and had had every opportunity to destroy the transport when the charges were being moved from the store to the airfield. Moreover, he said, the officers who took the decision to use nuclear weapons could easily have been killed before they took the decision. Kharchenko produced proof in support of his statements. When this produced no magic results, Kharchenko repeated his 'act' at other major manoeuvres until his persistence paid off. Eventually he obtained permission to form a battalion for operations in the enemy's rear directed at his nuclear weapons and his command posts.

The battalion operated very successfully, and that was the beginning of the resurrection of *spetsnaz*. All the contemporary formations of *spetsnaz* have been created anew. That is why, unlike those which existed during the war, they are not honoured with the title of 'guards' units.⁷

⁷ Kharchenko himself moved steadily up the promotion ladder. From 1961 he was deputy to the Chief of Engineering troops and from February 1965 he was head of the same service. In 1972 he was promoted Marshal of engineering troops. Having attained such heights, however, Kharchenko did not forget his creation, and he was a frequent guest in the 'Olympic Village', the main *spetsnaz* training centre near Kirovograd. When he was killed in 1975 during the testing of a new weapon, his citations used the highest peacetime formula 'killed in the course of carrying out his official duties', which is very seldom met with in reference to this senior category of Soviet officers.

Chapter 4. The Fighting Units of *Spetsnaz*

Spetsnaz is made up of three distinct elements: the fighting units, the units of professional sportsmen and the network of secret agents. In numerical terms the fighting units of *spetsnaz* are the largest. They are composed of soldiers from the ranks, out of those who are especially strong, especially tough and especially loyal.

A factor that facilitates the selection process is that within the Soviet Army there exists a hidden system for the selection of soldiers. Long before they put on a military uniform, the millions of recruits are carefully screened and divided into categories in accordance with their political reliability, their physical and mental development, the extent of their political involvement, and the 'cleanliness' (from the Communist point of view) of their personal and family record. The Soviet soldier does not know to which category he belongs, and in fact he knows nothing about the existence of the various categories. If a soldier is included in a higher category than his comrades that does not necessarily mean that he is fortunate. On the contrary, the best thing for a soldier is to be put into the lowest category and to perform his two years of military service in some remote and God-forsaken pioneer battalion in which there is neither discipline nor supervision, or in units of which the officers have long since drunk away all the authority they had. The higher the category the soldier is put into the more difficult his military service will be.

Soldiers of the highest category make up the Kremlin guard, the troops protecting the government communications, the frontier troops of the KGB and *spetsnaz*. Being included in the highest category does not necessarily mean being posted to the Kremlin, to a *spetsnaz* brigade or to a government communications centre. The highest-category men selected by the local military authorities simply represent the best human material which is offered to the 'customer' for him to choose from. The 'customer' selects only what suits his need. All those who do not appeal to the customers move down to a lower level and are offered to representatives of the next echelon, that of the strategic missile troops, the airborne forces and crews of nuclear submarines.

The young soldier does not realise, of course, what is going on. He is simply summoned to a room where people he doesn't know ask him a lot of questions. A few days later he is called to the room again and finds a different set of strangers there who also ask him questions.

This system of sorting out recruits reminds one of the system of closed shops for leading comrades. The highest official has the first choice. Then his deputy can go to the shop and choose something from what remains. Then lower ranking officials are allowed into the shop, then their deputies, and so on. In this system *spetsnaz* rank as the very highest category.

The soldiers who have been picked out by *spetsnaz* officers are gathered together into groups and are convoyed by officers and sergeants to fighting units of *spetsnaz*, where they are formed into groups and go through an intensive course of training lasting several weeks. At the end of the course the soldier fires shots from his Kalashnikov automatic rifle for the first time and is then made to take the military oath. The best out of the group of young soldiers are then sent to a *spetsnaz* training unit from which they return six months later with the rank of sergeant, while the rest are posted to fighting units.

In *spetsnaz*, as throughout the Soviet Army, they observe the 'cult of the old soldier'. All soldiers are divided into *stariki* ('old men') and *salagi* ('small fry'). A real *salaga* is a soldier who has only just started his service. A really 'old man' (some twenty years' old) is one who is about to complete his service in a few months. A man who is neither a real *starik* nor a real *salaga* falls between the two, a *starik* being compared to anyone who has done less time than he has, and a *salaga* to anyone who has served in the army a few months longer than he.

Having been recruited into *spetsnaz*, the soldier has to sign an undertaking not to disclose secret information. He has no right ever to tell anyone where he has served or what his service consisted of. At most he has the right to say he served with the airborne corps. Disclosure of the secrets of *spetsnaz* is treated as high treason, punishable by death according to article 64 of the Soviet criminal code.

Once he has completed his two years' service in *spetsnaz* a soldier has three choices. He can become an officer, in which case he is offered special terms for entering the higher school for officers of the airborne forces in Ryazan. He can become a regular soldier in *spetsnaz*, for which he has to go through a number of supplementary courses. Or he has the option to join the reserve. If he chooses the last course he is regarded as being a member of the *spetsnaz* reserve and is with it for the next five years. Then, up to the age of 30, he is part of the airborne reserve. After that he is considered to belong to the ordinary infantry reserve until he is fifty. Like any other reserve force, the existence of a *spetsnaz* reserve makes it possible at a time of mobilisation to multiply the size of the *spetsnaz* fighting units with reservists if necessary.

Mud, nothing but mud all round, and it was pouring with rain. It had been raining throughout the summer, so that everything was wet and hanging limp. Everything was stuck in the mud. Every soldier's boot carried kilograms of it. But their bodies were covered in mud as well, and their hands and faces up to their ears and further. It was clear that the sergeant had not taken pity on the young *spetsnaz* recruits that day. They had been called up only a month before. They had been formed up into a provisional group and been put through a month's course for young soldiers which every one of them would remember all his life in his worst nightmare.

That morning they had been divided up into companies and platoons. Before letting them back into their mud-covered, sodden tent at the end of the day each sergeant had time to show his platoon the extent of his authority.

`Get inside!'

There were ten young men crowding around the entrance to a huge tent, as big as a prison barracks.

`Get inside, damn you!' The sergeant urged them on.

The first soldier thrust aside the heavy wet tarpaulin which served as a door and was about to enter when something stopped him. On the muddy, much trampled ground just inside the entrance a dazzlingly white towel had been laid down in place of a doormat. The soldier hesitated. But behind him the sergeant was pushing and shouting: `Go on in, damn you!'

The soldier was not inclined to step on the towel. At the same time he couldn't make up his mind to jump over it, because the mud from his boots would inevitably land on the towel. Eventually he jumped, and the others jumped across the towel after him. For some reason no one dared to take the towel away. Everyone could see that there was some reason why it had been put there right in the entrance. A beautiful clean towel. With mud all around it. What was it doing there?

A whole platoon lived in one huge tent. The men slept in two-tier metal bunks. The top bunks were occupied by the *stariki* — the `old men' of nineteen or even nineteen and a half, who had already served a year or even eighteen months in *spetsnaz*. The *salagi* slept on the bottom bunks. They had served only six months. By comparison with those who were now jumping over the towel they were of course *stariki* too. They had all in their day jumped awkwardly across the towel. Now

they were watching silently, patiently and attentively to see how the new men behaved in that situation.

The new men behaved as anybody would in their situation. Some pushed from behind, and there was the towel in front. So they jumped, and clustered together in the centre of the tent, not knowing where to put their hands or where to look. It was strange. They seemed to want to look at the ground. All the young men behaved in exactly the same way: a jump, into the crowd and eyes down. But no — the last soldier behaved quite differently. He burst into the tent, helped by a kick from the sergeant. On seeing the white towel he pulled himself up sharply, stood on it in his dirty boots and proceeded to wipe them as if he really were standing on a doormat. Having wiped his feet he didn't join the crowd but marched to the far corner of the tent where he had seen a spare bed.

'Is this mine?'

'It's yours,' the platoon shouted approvingly. 'Come here, mate, there's a better place here! Do you want to eat?'

That night all the young recruits would get beaten. And they would be beaten on the following nights. They would be driven out into the mud barefoot, and they would be made to sleep in the lavatories (standing up or lying down, as you wish). They would be beaten with belts, with slippers and with spoons, with anything suitable for causing pain. The *stariki* would use the *salagi* on which to ride horseback in battles with their friends. The *salagi* would clean the 'old men's weapons and do their dirty jobs for them. There would be the same goings-on as in the rest of the Soviet Army. *Stariki* everywhere play the same kind of tricks on the recruits. The rituals and the rules are the same everywhere. The *spetsnaz* differs from the other branches only in that they place the dazzlingly clean towel at the entrance to the tent for the recruits to walk over. The sense of this particular ritual is clear and simple: We are nice people. We welcome you, young man, cordially into our friendly collective. Our work is very hard, the hardest in the whole army, but we do not let it harden our hearts. Come into our house, young man, and make yourself at home. We respect you and will spare nothing for you. You see — we have even put the towel with which we wipe our faces for you to walk on in your dirty feet. So that's it, is it — you don't accept our welcome? You reject our modest gift? You don't even wish to wipe your boots on what we wipe our faces with! What sort of people do you take us for? You may certainly not respect us, but why did you come into our house with dirty boots?

Only one of the *salagi*, the one who wiped his feet on the towel, will be able to sleep undisturbed. He will receive his full ration of food and will clean only his own weapon; and perhaps the *stariki* will give instructions that he should not do even that. There are many others in the platoon to do it.

Where on earth could a young eighteen-year-old soldier have learnt about the *spetsnaz* tradition? Where could he have heard about the white towel? *Spetsnaz* is a secret organisation which treasures its traditions and keeps them to itself. A former *spetsnaz* soldier must never tell tales: he'll lose his tongue if he does. In any case he is unlikely to tell anyone about the towel trick, especially someone who has yet to be called up. I was beaten up, so let him be beaten up as well, he reasons.

There are only three possible ways the young soldier could have found out about the towel. Either he simply guessed what was happening himself. The towel had been laid down at the entrance, so it must be to wipe his feet on. What else could it be for? Or perhaps his elder brother had been through the *spetsnaz*. He had, of course, never called it by that name or said what it was for, but he might have said about the towel: 'Watch out, brother, there are some units that have very strange customs.... But just take care — if you let on I'll knock your head off. And I can.' Or his elder brother might have spent some time in a penal battalion. Perhaps he had been

in *spetsnaz* and in a penal battalion. For the custom of laying out a towel in the entrance before the arrival of recruits did not originate in *spetsnaz* but in the penal battalions. It is possible that it was handed on to the present-day penal battalions from the prisons of the past.

The links between *spetsnaz* and the penal battalions are invisible, but they are many and very strong.

In the first place, service in *spetsnaz* is the toughest form of service in the Soviet Army. The physical and psychological demands are not only increased deliberately to the very highest point that a man can bear; they are frequently, and also deliberately, taken beyond any permissible limits. It is quite understandable that a *spetsnaz* soldier should find he cannot withstand these extreme demands and breaks down. The breakdown may take many different forms: suicide, severe depression, hysteria, madness or desertion. As I was leaving an intelligence unit of a military district on promotion to Moscow I suddenly came across, on a little railway station, a *spetsnaz* officer I knew being escorted by two armed soldiers.

'What on earth are you doing here?' I exclaimed. 'You don't see people on this station more than once in a month!'

'One of my men ran away!'

'A new recruit?'

'That's the trouble, he's a *starik*. Only another month to go.'

'Did he take his weapon?'

'No, he went without it.'

I expressed my surprise, wished the lieutenant luck and went on my way. How the search ended I do not know. At the very next station soldiers of the Interior Ministry's troops were searching the carriages. The alarm had gone out all over the district.

Men run away from *spetsnaz* more often than from other branches of the services. But it is usually a case of a new recruit who has been stretched to the limit and who usually takes a rifle with him. A man like that will kill anyone who gets in his path. But he is usually quickly run down and killed. But in this case it was a *starik* who had run off, and without a rifle. Where had he gone, and why? I didn't know. Did they find him? I didn't know that either. Of course they found him. They are good at that. If he wasn't carrying a rifle he would not have been killed. They don't kill people without reason. So what could he expect? Two years in a penal battalion and then the month in *spetsnaz* that he had not completed.

Spetsnaz has no distinguishing badge or insignia — officially, at any rate. But unofficially the *spetsnaz* badge is a wolf, or rather a pack of wolves. The wolf is a strong, proud animal which is remarkable for its quite incredible powers of endurance. A wolf can run for hours through deep snow at great speed, and then, when he scents his prey, put on another astonishing burst of speed. Sometimes he will chase his prey for days, reducing it to a state of exhaustion. Exploiting their great capacity for endurance, wolves first exhaust and then attack animals noted for their tremendous strength, such as the elk. People say rightly that the 'wolf lives on its legs'. Wolves will bring down a huge elk, not so much by the strength of their teeth as by the strength of their legs.

The wolf also has a powerful intellect. He is proud and independent. You can tame and domesticate a squirrel, a fox or even a great elk with bloodshot eyes. And there are many animals that can be trained to perform. A performing bear can do really miraculous things. But you cannot tame a wolf or train it to perform. The wolf lives in a pack, a closely knit and well organised fighting unit of frightful predators. The tactics of a wolf pack are the very embodiment of flexibility and daring. The wolves' tactics are an enormous collection of various tricks and combinations, a mixture of cunning and strength, confusing manoeuvres and sudden attacks.

No other animal in the world could better serve as a symbol of the *spetsnaz*. And there is good reason why the training of a *spetsnaz* soldier starts with the training of his legs. A man is as strong and young as his legs are strong and young. If a man has a sloppy way of walking and if he drags his feet along the ground, that means he himself is weak. On the other hand, a dancing, springy gait is a sure sign of physical and mental health. *Spetsnaz* soldiers are often dressed up in the uniform of other branches of the services and stationed in the same military camps as other especially secret units, usually with communications troops. But one doesn't need any special experience to pick out the *spetsnaz* man from the crowd. You can tell him by the way he walks. I shall never forget one soldier who was known as 'The Spring'. He was not very tall, slightly stooping and round-shouldered. But his feet were never still. He kept dancing about the whole time. He gave the impression of being restrained only by some invisible string, and if the string were cut the soldier would go on jumping, running and dancing and never stop. The military commissariat whose job it was to select the young soldiers and sort them out paid no attention to him and he fetched up in an army missile brigade. He had served almost a year there when the brigade had to take part in manoeuvres in which a *spetsnaz* company was used against them. When the exercise was over the *spetsnaz* company was fed there in the forest next to the missile troops. The officer commanding the *spetsnaz* company noticed the soldier in the missile unit who kept dancing about all the time he was standing in the queue for his soup.

'Come over here, soldier.' The officer drew a line on the ground. 'Now jump.'

The soldier stood on the line and jumped from there, without any run-up. The company commander did not have anything with him to measure the length of the jump, but there was no need. The officer was experienced in such things and knew what was good and what was excellent.

'Get into my car!'

'I cannot, comrade major, without my officer's permission.'

'Get in and don't worry, you'll be all right with me. I will speak up for you and tell the right people where you have been.'

The company commander made the soldier get into his car and an hour later presented him to the chief of army intelligence, saying:

'Comrade colonel, look what I've found among the missile troops.'

'Now then, young man, let's see you jump.'

The soldier jumped from the spot. This time there was a tape measure handy and it showed he had jumped 241 centimetres.

'Take the soldier into your lot and find him the right sort of cap,' the colonel said.

The commander of the *spetsnaz* company took off his own blue beret and gave it to the soldier. The chief of intelligence immediately phoned the chief of staff of the army, who gave the appropriate order to the missile brigade — forget you ever had such a man.

The dancing soldier was given the nickname 'The Spring' on account of his flexibility. He had never previously taken a serious interest in sport, but he was a born athlete. Under the direction of experienced trainers his talents were revealed and he immediately performed brilliantly. A year later, when he completed his military service, he was already clearing 2 metres 90 centimetres. He was invited to join the professional athletic service of *spetsnaz*, and he agreed.

The long jump with no run has been undeservedly forgotten and is no longer included in the programme of official competitions. When it was included in the Olympic Games the record set in 1908, was 3 metres 33 centimetres. As an athletic skill the long jump without a run is the most reliable indication of the strength of a person's legs. And the strength of his legs is a reliable indicator of the whole physical

condition of a soldier. Practically half a person's muscles are to be found in his legs. *Spetsnaz* devotes colossal attention to developing the legs of its men, using many simple but very effective exercises: running upstairs, jumping with ankles tied together up a few steps and down again, running up steep sandy slopes, jumping down from a great height, leaping from moving cars and trains, knee-bending with a barbell on the shoulders, and of course the jump from a spot. At the end of the 1970s the *spetsnaz* record in this exercise, which has not been recognised by the official sports authorities, was 3 metres 51 centimetres.

A *spetsnaz* soldier knows that he is invincible. This may be a matter of opinion, but other people's opinions do not interest the soldier. He knows himself that he is invincible and that's enough for him. The idea is instilled into him carefully, delicately, not too insistently, but continually and effectively. The process of psychological training is inseparably linked to the physical toughening. The development of a spirit of self-confidence and of independence and of a feeling of superiority over any opponent is carried out at the same time as the development of the heart, the muscles and the lungs. The most important element in training a *spetsnaz* soldier is to make him believe in his own strength.

A man's potential is unlimited, the reasoning goes. A man can reach any heights in life in any sphere of activity. But in order to defeat his opponents a man must first overcome himself, combat his own fears, his lack of confidence and laziness. The path upwards is one of continual battle with oneself. A man must force himself to rise sooner than the others and go to bed later. He must exclude from his life everything that prevents him from achieving his objective. He must subordinate the whole of his existence to the strictest regime. He must give up taking days off. He must use his time to the best possible advantage and fit in even more than was thought possible. A man aiming for a particular target can succeed only if he uses every minute of his life to the maximum advantage for carrying out his plan. A man should find four hours' sleep quite sufficient, and the rest of his time can be used for concentrating on the achievement of his objective.

I imagine that to instil this psychology into a mass army formed by means of compulsory mobilisation would be impossible and probably unnecessary. But in separate units carefully composed of the best human material such a philosophy is entirely acceptable.

In numbers *spetsnaz* amounts to less than one per cent of all the Soviet armed forces in peacetime. *Spetsnaz* is the best, carefully selected part of the armed forces, and the philosophy of each man's unlimited potential has been adopted in its entirety by every member of the organisation. It is a philosophy which cannot be put into words. The soldier grasps it not with his head, but with his feet, his shoulders and his sweat. He soon becomes convinced that the path to victory and self-perfection is a battle with himself, with his own mental and physical weakness. Training of any kind makes sense only if it brings a man to the very brink of his physical and mental powers. To begin with, he must know precisely the limits of his capabilities. For example: he can do 40 press-ups. He must know this figure precisely and that it really is the limit of his capacity. No matter how he strains he can do no more. But every training session is a cruel battle to beat his previous record. As he starts a training session a soldier has to promise himself that he will beat his own record today or die in the attempt.

The only people who become champions are those who go into each training session as if they are going to their death or to their last battle in which they will either win or die. The victor is the one for whom victory is more important than life. The victor is the one who dives a centimetre deeper than his maximum depth, knowing that his lungs will not hold out and that death lies beyond his limit. And once

he has overcome the fear of death, the next time he will dive even deeper! *Spetsnaz* senior lieutenant Vladimir Salnikov, world champion and Olympic champion swimmer, repeats the slogan every day: conquer yourself, and that was why he defeated everyone at the Olympic Games.

An excellent place to get to know and to overcome oneself is the 'Devil's Ditch' which has been dug at the *spetsnaz* central training centre near Kirovograd. It is a ditch with metal spikes stuck into the bottom. The narrowest width is three metres. From there it gets wider and wider.

Nobody is forced to jump the ditch. But if someone wants to test himself, to conquer himself and to overcome his own cowardice, let him go and jump. It can be a standing jump or a running jump, in running shoes and a track suit, with heavy boots and a big rucksack on your back, or carrying a weapon. It is up to you. You start jumping at the narrow part and gradually move outwards. If you make a mistake, trip on something or don't reach the other side you land with your side on the spikes.

There are not many who wanted to risk their guts at the Devil's Ditch, until a strict warning was put up: 'Only for real *spetsnaz* fighters!' Now nobody has to be invited to try it. There are always plenty of people there and always somebody jumping, summer and winter, on slippery mud and snow, in gas-masks and without them, carrying an ammunition box, hand-in-hand, with hands tied together, and even with someone on the back. The man who jumps the Devil's Ditch has confidence in himself, considers himself invincible, and has grounds for doing so.

The relations within *spetsnaz* units are very similar to those within the wolf pack. We do not know everything about the habits and the ways of wolves. But I have heard Soviet zoologists talk about the life and behaviour of wolves and, listening to them, I have been reminded of *spetsnaz*. They say the wolf has not only a very developed brain but is also the noblest of all the living things inhabiting our planet. The mental capacity of the wolf is reckoned to be far greater than the dog's. What I have heard from experts who have spent their whole lives in the taiga of the Ussuri, coming across wolves every day, is sharply at odds with what people say about them who have seen them only in zoos.

The experts say that the she-wolf never kills her sickly wolf-cubs. She makes her other cubs do it. The she-wolf herself gives the cubs the first lesson in hunting in a group. And the cubs' first victim is their weaker brother. But once the weaker ones are disposed of, the she-wolf protects the rest. In case of danger she would rather sacrifice herself than let anyone harm them. By destroying the weaker cubs the she-wolf preserves the purity and strength of her offspring, permitting only the strong to live. This is very close to the process of selection within *spetsnaz*. At the outset the weaker soldier is naturally not killed but thrown out of *spetsnaz* into a more restful service. When a unit is carrying out a serious operation behind enemy lines, however, the wolf-cubs of *spetsnaz* will kill their comrade without a second thought if he appears to weaken. The killing of the weak is not the result of a court decision but of lynch law. It may appear to be an act of barbarism, but it is only by doing so that the wolves have retained their strength for millions of years and remained masters of the forests until such a time as an even more frightful predator — man — started to destroy them on a massive scale.

But the she-wolf has also another reputation, and it is no accident that the Romans for centuries had a she-wolf as the symbol of their empire. A strong, wise, cruel and at the same time caring and affectionate she-wolf reared two human cubs: could there be a more striking symbol of love and strength?

Within their pack the wolves conduct a running battle to gain a higher place in the hierarchy. And I never saw anything inside *spetsnaz* that could be described as soldier's friendship, at least nothing like what I had seen among the tank troops and

the infantry. Within *spetsnaz* a bitter battle goes on for a place in the pack, closer to the leader and even in the leader's place. In the course of this bitter battle for a place in the pack the *spetsnaz* soldier is sometimes capable of displaying such strength of character as I have never seen elsewhere.

The beating up of the young recruits who are just starting their service is an effort on the part of the *stariki* to preserve their dominating position in the section, platoon or company. But among the recruits too there is right from the beginning a no less bitter battle going on for priority. This struggle takes the form of continual fighting between groups and individuals. Even among the *stariki* not everyone is not on the same level: they also have their various levels of seniority. The more senior levels strive to keep the inferior ones under their control. The inferior ones try to extract themselves from that control. It is very difficult, because if a young soldier tries to oppose someone who has served half a year more than he has, the longer-serving man will be supported not only by the whole of his class but also by the other senior classes: the *salaga* is not only offending a soldier senior to himself (never mind who he is and what the older ones think of him) but is also undermining the whole tradition established over the decades in *spetsnaz* and the rest of the Soviet Army. In spite of all this, attempts at protest by the inferior classes occur regularly and are sometimes successful.

I recall a soldier of enormous physique and brutal features known as 'The Demon' who, after serving for half a year, got together a group of soldiers from all the classes and lorded it over not just his own platoon but the whole company. He was good at sensing the mood of a company. He and his group never attacked *stariki* in normal circumstances. They would wait patiently until one of the *stariki* did something which by *spetsnaz* standards is considered a disgrace, like stealing. Only then would they set about him, usually at night. The Demon was skilful at making use of provocation. For example, having stolen a bottle of aftershave from a soldier, he would slip it to one of his enemies. There is no theft in *spetsnaz*. The thief is, then, always discovered very quickly and punished mercilessly. And The Demon was, of course, in charge of the punitive action.

But seniority in *spetsnaz* units is not determined only by means of fists. In The Demon's group there was a soldier known as 'The Squint', a man of medium height and build. I do not know how it came about, but it soon became apparent that, although The Demon was lording it over the whole company, he never opposed The Squint. One day The Squint made fun of him in public, drawing attention to his ugly nostrils. There was some mild laughter in the company and The Demon was clearly humiliated, but for some reason he did not choose to exercise his strength. The Squint soon came to dominate the whole company, but it never occurred to him to fight anyone or to order anybody about. He simply told The Demon out loud what he wanted, and The Demon used his strength to influence the whole company. This went on for about three months. How the system worked and why, was not for us officers to know. We watched what was going on from the sidelines, neither interfering nor trying to look too closely into it.

But then there was a revolution. Someone caught The Demon out in a provocation. The Demon again stole something and slipped it to one of his *stariki*, and he was found out. The Demon and The Squint and their closest friends were beaten all night until the duty officer intervened. The Demon and The Squint were locked up temporarily in a store where they kept barrels of petrol. They kept them there for several days because the likelihood of a bloody settling of accounts was considerable. Meanwhile the whole affair was reported to the chief of Intelligence for the district. Knowing the way things were done in *spetsnaz*, he decided that both men should be tried by a military tribunal. The result was a foregone conclusion. As usual the tribunal

did not hear the true causes of the affair. The officer commanding the company simply put together a number of minor offences: being late on parade, late for inspection, found in a drunken state, and so forth. The whole company confirmed everything in their evidence, and the accused made no attempt to deny the charges. Yet there was some rough justice in the process, because they probably both deserved their sentences of eighteen months in a penal battalion.

The silent majority can put up with anything for a long time. But sometimes a spark lands in the powder keg and there is a frightful explosion. Often in *spetsnaz* a group of especially strong and bullying soldiers will dominate the scene for a certain time, until suddenly a terrible counter blow is struck, whereupon the group is broken up into pieces and its members, scorned and disliked, have to give way to another group.

In every company there are a few soldiers who do not try to dominate the rest, who do not voice their opinions and who do not try to achieve great influence. At the same time everyone is aware of some enormous hidden strength in them, and no one dares to touch them. This kind of soldier is usually found somewhere near the top of the platoon's hierarchy, rarely at the very top.

I remember a soldier known as 'The Machine'. He always kept himself to himself. He probably experienced no great emotions, and by *spetsnaz* standards he was probably too kind and placid a person. He did his job properly and seemed never to experience in his work either enthusiasm or resentment. Nobody, not even The Demon, dared touch The Machine. On one occasion, when The Demon was beating up one of the young soldiers, The Machine went up to him and said, 'That's enough of that.' The Demon did not argue, but stopped what he was doing and moved away. The Machine reverted to silence.

It was clear to everyone that The Machine's dislike of The Demon had not been given its full expression. And so it was. On the night when the whole company beat up The Demon and The Squint, The Machine lay on his bed and took no part in the beating. Finally his patience gave out, he went to the toilet where the sentence was being carried out, pushed the crowd aside with his enormous hands and said, 'Let me give him a punch.'

He gave The Demon a blow in the stomach with his mighty fist. Everyone thought he had killed the man, who bent double and collapsed in a heap like a wooden puppet with string instead of joints. They poured water over him and for half an hour afterwards did not strike him. They were afraid of finishing it off, afraid they would be tried for murder. Then they saw that The Demon had survived and they continued to beat him. Quite aloof from the squabble for top position in the company, The Machine had gone straight back to bed.

In the same company there was a soldier known as 'The Otter'; slim, well built, handsome. He was not very big and appeared to have little strength. But he was like a sprung steel plate. His strength seemed to be explosive. He had amazing reactions. When, as a recruit, he first jumped over the towel, he was subjected to the usual treatment by the stariki. 'Drop your pants and lie down,' they said. He took hold of his belt as though he was ready to carry out their orders. They dropped their guard, and at that moment The Otter struck one of them in the mouth with such a blow that his victim fell to the ground and was knocked senseless. While he was falling The Otter struck another one in the teeth. A third backed out of the way.

That night, when he was asleep, they bound him in a blanket and beat him up brutally. They beat him the second night, and the third, and again and again. But he was a very unusual person even by *spetsnaz* standards. He possessed rather unusual

muscles. When they were relaxed they looked like wet rags. He suffered a lot of beatings, but one had the impression that when he was relaxed he felt no pain. Perhaps there were qualities in his character that put him above the standards we were used to. When The Otter slept he was then in the power of the *stariki* and they did not spare him. They attacked him in the dark, so that he should not recognise his attackers. But he knew all of them instinctively. He never quarrelled with them and he always avoided groups of them. If they attacked him in the daylight he made no great effort to resist. But if he came across a *stariki* on his own he would punch him in the teeth. If he came across him again he would do the same again. He could knock a man's teeth out. He would strike suddenly and like lightning. He would be standing relaxed, his arms hanging down, looking at the ground. Then suddenly there would be a frightful, shattering blow. On several occasions he punched *stariki* in the presence of the whole company and sometimes even with officers present. How beautifully he punched them! If there were officers present the company commander would admire The Otter and indicate his approval with a smile on his face — then sentence him to three days in the guard room, because they were not allowed to hit each other.

This went on for a long time, until the *stariki* became tired of it all and left him alone. Nobody touched him any more. Six months later they offered him a place at the very top. He refused, still keeping his silence. He never got involved in the affairs of the platoon and had no desire and no claim to be a leader. When the whole company was beating up The Demon The Otter did not join in. Some years later I met a *spetsnaz* man I knew and learnt that The Machine had been offered a job with the professional athletic service. He had refused and had gone back to some remote Siberian village where his home was. But The Otter had accepted the offer and is now serving in one of the best *spetsnaz* formations, training for the ultimate job of assassinating key political and military figures on the enemy's side.

There are other ways in which a *spetsnaz* soldier can defend his position in the hierarchy, apart from punching people in the face. *Spetsnaz* respects people who take risks, who have strength and display courage. A man who will jump further than others on a motorcycle, or one who will wait longer than others to open his parachute, or one who hammers nails into a plank with the palm of his hand — such people are assured of respect. A man who goes on running in spite of tiredness when all the others are collapsing, who can go longer than others without food and drink, who can shoot better than the others — such people are also well thought of. But when everybody is thought highly of, there is still a struggle among the best. And if there is no other way for a man to show that he is better than another, physical violence will break out.

Two soldiers in leading positions may fight each other secretly without anyone else being present: they go off into the forest and fight it out. A conflict may begin with a sudden, treacherous attack by one man on another. There are also open, legal encounters. Sport is particularly admired by *spetsnaz*. The whole company is brought together, and they fight each other without rules, using all the tricks that *spetsnaz* has taught them — boxing, sambo, karate. Some fights go on until the first blood is drawn. Others go on until one person is humiliated and admits he is defeated.

Among the various ways of finding leaders a very effective one is the fight with whips. It is an old gypsy way of establishing a relationship. The leather-plaited whip several metres long is a weapon only rarely met with in *spetsnaz*. But if a soldier (usually a Kalmik, a Mongolian or a gypsy) shows that he can handle the weapon with real skill he is allowed to carry a whip with him as a weapon. When two experts with

the whip meet up and each claims to be the better one, the argument is resolved in a frightful contest.

When we speak about the customs observed within *spetsnaz* we must of course take into account the simple fact that *spetsnaz* has its own standards and its own understanding of the words 'bad' and 'good'. Let us not be too strict in our judgement of the *spetsnaz* soldiers for their cruel ways, their bloodthirstiness and their lack of humanity. *Spetsnaz* is a closed society of people living permanently at the extreme limits of human existence. They are people who even in peacetime are risking their lives. Their existence bears no relation at all to the way the majority of the inhabitants of our planet live. In *spetsnaz* a man can be admired for qualities of which the average man may have no idea.

The typical *spetsnaz* soldier is a sceptic, a cynic and a pessimist. He believes profoundly in the depravity of human nature and knows (from his own experience) that in extreme conditions a man becomes a beast. There are situations where a man will save the lives of others at the expense of his own life. But in the opinion of the *spetsnaz* men this happens only in a sudden emergency: for example, a man may throw himself in front of a train to push another man aside and save his life. But when an emergency situation, such as a terrible famine, lasts for months or even years, the *spetsnaz* view is that it is every man for himself. If a man helps another in need it means that the need is not extreme. If a man shares his bread with another in time of famine it means the famine is not extreme.

In the *spetsnaz* soldier's opinion the most dangerous thing he can do is put faith in his comrade, who may at the most critical moment turn out to be a beast. It is much simpler for him not to trust his comrade (or anybody else), so that in a critical situation there will be no shattered illusions. Better that he regards all his fellow human beings as beasts from the outset than to make that discovery in an utterly hopeless situation.

The soldier's credo can be stated in a triple formula: Don't trust, don't beg, don't fear. It is a formula which did not originate in *spetsnaz*, but in prisons many centuries ago. In it can be seen the whole outlook of the *spetsnaz* soldier: his practically superhuman contempt for death, and a similar contempt for everybody around him. He does not believe in justice, goodness or humanity. He does not even believe in force until it has been demonstrated by means of a fist, a whip or the teeth of a dog. When it is demonstrated his natural reflex is to challenge it immediately.

Sometimes in the life of a *spetsnaz* soldier he has a sort of revelation, a sense of complete freedom and happiness. In this mental state he fears nobody at all, trusts no one at all, and would not ask anybody for anything, even for mercy. This state comes about in a combination of circumstances in which a soldier would go voluntarily to his death, completely contemptuous of it. At that moment the soldier's mind triumphs completely over cowardice, the vileness and meanness around him. Once he has experienced this sensation of liberation, the soldier is capable of any act of heroism, even sacrificing his life to save a comrade. But his act has nothing in common with ordinary soldiers' friendship. The motive behind such an act is to show, at the cost of his own life, his superiority over all around him, including the comrade he saves.

In order for such a moment of revelation to come on some occasion, the soldier goes through a long and careful training. All the beatings, all the insults and humiliations that he has suffered, are steps on the path to a brilliant suicidal feat of heroism. The well-fed, self-satisfied, egoistic soldier will never perform any acts of

heroism. Only someone who has been driven barefoot into the mud and snow, who has had even his bread taken away from him and has proved every day with his fists his right to existence — only this kind of man is capable of showing one day that he really is the best.

Chapter 5. The 'Other People'

Although the vast majority of *spetsnaz* is made up of Slavonic personnel, there are some exceptions.

At first glance you would say he is a gypsy. Tall, well-built, athletic in his movements, handsome, with a hooked nose and flashing eyes. The captain plays the guitar so well that passers-by stop and do not go away until he stops playing. He dances as very few know how. His officer's uniform fits him as if it were on a dummy in the window of the main military clothing shop on the Arbat.

The officer has had a typical career. He was born in 1952 in Ivanovo, where he went to school. Then he attended the higher school for airborne troops in Ryazan, and he wears the uniform of the airborne forces. He commands a company in the Siberian military district. All very typical and familiar. At first glance. But he is Captain Roberto Rueda-Maestro — not a very usual name for a Soviet officer.

There is a mistake: the captain is not a gypsy. And if we study him more carefully we notice some other peculiarities. He is wearing the uniform of the airborne troops. But there are no airborne troops in the Siberian military district where he is stationed. Even stranger is the fact that after finishing school Roberto spent some time in Spain as a tourist. That was in 1969. Can we imagine a tourist from the Soviet Union being in Spain under Franco's rule, at a time when the Soviet Union maintained no diplomatic relations with Spain? Roberto Rueda-Maestro was in Spain at that time and has some idea of the country. But the strangest aspect of this story is that, after spending some time in a capitalist country, the young man was able to enter a Soviet military school. And not any school, but the Ryazan higher school for airborne troops.

These facts are clues. The full set of clues gives us the right answer, without fear of contradiction. The captain is a *spetsnaz* officer.

During the Civil War in Spain thousands of Spanish children were evacuated to the Soviet Union. The exact number of children evacuated is not known. The figures given about this are very contradictory. But there were enough of them for several full-length films to be made and for books and articles to be written about them in the Soviet Union.

As young men they soon became cadets at Soviet military schools. A well-known example is Ruben Ruis Ibarruri, son of Dolores Ibarruri, general secretary of the Communist Party of Spain. Even at this time the Spaniards were put into the airborne troops. Ruben Ibarruri, for example, found himself in the 8th airborne corps. It is true that in a war of defence those formations intended for aggressive advancing operations were found to be unnecessary, and they were reorganised into guard rifle divisions and used in defensive battles at Stalingrad. Lieutenant Ibarruri was killed while serving in the 35th guard rifle division which had been formed out of the 8th airborne corps. It was a typical fate for young men at that time. But then they were evacuated to the Urals and Siberia, where the Spanish Communist Party (under

Stalin's control) organised special schools for them. From then on references to Spanish children appeared very rarely in the Soviet press.

One of the special schools was situated in the town of Ivanovo and was known as the E. D. Stasova International School. Some graduates of this school later turned up in Fidel Castro's personal bodyguard, some became leading figures in the Cuban intelligence service — the most aggressive in the world, exceeding its teachers in the GRU and KGB in both cruelty and cunning. Some of the school's graduates were used as 'illegals' by the GRU and KGB.

It has to be said, however, that the majority of the first generation of Spanish children remained in the Soviet Union with no possibility of leaving it. But then in the 1950s and 1960s a new generation of Soviet Spaniards was born, differing from the first generation in that it had no parents in the USSR. This is very important if a young man is being sent abroad on a risky mission, for the Communists then have the man's parents as hostages.

The second generation of Spaniards is used by the Soviet Government in many ways for operations abroad. One very effective device is to send some young Soviet Spaniards to Cuba, give them time to get used to the country and acclimatise themselves, and then send them to Africa and Central America as Cubans to fight against 'American Imperialism'. The majority of Cuban troops serving abroad are certainly Cubans. But among them is a certain percentage of men who were born in the Soviet Union and who have Russian wives and children and a military rank in the armed forces of the USSR.

For some reason Captain Roberto Rueda-Maestro is serving in the Urals military district. I must emphasise that we are still talking about the usual *spetsnaz* units, and we haven't started to discuss 'agents'. An agent is a citizen of a foreign country recruited into the Soviet intelligence service. Roberto is a citizen of the Soviet Union. He does not have and has never had in his life any other citizenship. He has a Russian wife and children born on the territory of the USSR, as he was himself. That is why the captain is serving in a normal *spetsnaz* unit, as an ordinary Soviet officer.

Spetsnaz seeks out and finds — it is easy to do in the Soviet Union — people born in the Soviet Union but of obviously foreign origin. With a name like Rueda-Maestro it is very difficult to make a career in any branch of the Soviet armed forces. The only exception is *spetsnaz*, where such a name is no obstacle but a passport to promotion.

In *spetsnaz* I have met people with German names such as Stolz, Schwarz, Weiss and so forth. The story of these Soviet Germans is also connected with the war. According to 1979 figures there were 1,846,000 Germans living in the Soviet Union. But most of those Germans came to Russia two hundred years ago and are of no use to *spetsnaz*. Different Germans are required, and they also exist in the Soviet Union.

During the war, and especially in its final stages, the Red Army took a tremendous number of German soldiers prisoner. The prisoners were held in utterly inhuman conditions, and it was not surprising that some of them did things that they would not have done in any other situation. They were people driven to extremes by the brutal Gulag regime, who committed crimes against their fellow prisoners, sometimes even murdering their comrades, or forcing them to suicide. Many of those who survived, once released from the prison camp, were afraid to return to Germany and settled in the Soviet Union. Though the percentage of such people was small it still meant quite

a lot of people, all of whom were of course on the records of the Soviet secret services and were used by them. The Soviet special services helped many of them to settle down and have a family. There were plenty of German women from among the Germans long settled in Russia. So now the Soviet Union has a second generation of Soviet Germans, born in the Soviet Union of fathers who have committed crimes against the German people. This is the kind of young German who can be met with in many *spetsnaz* units.

Very rarely one comes across young Soviet Italians, too, with the same background as the Spaniards and Germans. And *spetsnaz* contains Turks, Kurds, Greeks, Koreans, Mongolians, Finns and people of other nationalities. How they came to be there I do not know. But it can be taken for granted that every one of them has a much-loved family in the Soviet Union. *Spetsnaz* trusts its soldiers, but still prefers to have hostages for each of its men.

The result is that the percentage of *spetsnaz* soldiers who were born in the Soviet Union to parents of genuine foreign extraction is quite high. With the mixture of Soviet nationalities, mainly Russian, Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Georgians and Uzbeks, the units are a very motley company indeed. You may even, suddenly, come across a real Chinese. Such people, citizens of the USSR but of foreign extraction, are known as 'the other people'. I don't know where the name came from, but the foreigners accept it and are not offended. In my view it is used without any tinge of racism, in a spirit rather of friendship and good humour, to differentiate people who are on the one hand Soviet people born in the Soviet Union of Soviet parents, and who on the other hand differ sharply from the main body of *spetsnaz* soldiers in their appearance, speech, habits and manners.

I have never heard of there being purely national formations within *spetsnaz* — a German platoon or a Spanish company. It is perfectly possible that they would be created in case of necessity, and perhaps there are some permanent *spetsnaz* groups chosen on a purely national basis. But I cannot confirm this.

Chapter 6. Athletes

In the Soviet Union sport has been nationalised. That means to say that it does not serve the interests of individuals but of society as a whole. The interests of the individual and the interests of society are sometimes very different. The state defends the interests of society against individuals, not just in sport but in all other spheres.

Some individuals want to be strong, handsome and attractive. That is why 'body-building' is so popular in the West. It is an occupation for individuals. In the Soviet Union it scarcely exists, because such an occupation brings no benefit to the state. Why should the state spend the nation's resources so that someone can be strong and beautiful? Consequently the state does not spend a single *kopek* on such things, does not organise athletic competitions, does not reward the victors with prizes and does not advertise achievements in that field. There are some individuals who engage in body-building, but they have no resources and no rights to organise their own societies and associations.

The same applies to billiards, golf and some other forms of which the only purpose is relaxation and amusement. What benefits would it bring the state if it spent money

on such forms of sport? For the same reason the Soviet Union has done nothing about sport for invalids. Why should it? To make the invalids happy?

But that same state devotes colossal resources to sport which does bring benefit to the state. In the Soviet Union any sport is encouraged which: demonstrates the superiority of the Soviet system over any other system; provides the ordinary people with something to take their minds off their everyday worries; helps to strengthen the state, military and police apparatus.

The Soviet Union is ready to encourage any sport in which achievement is measured in minutes, seconds, metres, kilometres, centimetres, kilograms or grams. If an athlete shows some promise that he may run a distance a tenth of a second quicker than an American or may jump half a centimetre higher than his rival across the ocean, the state will create for such an athlete whatever conditions he needs: it will build him a personal training centre, get together a personal group of trainers, doctors, managers or scientific consultants. The state is rich enough to spend money on self-advertisement. These 'amateur' sportsmen earn large sums of money, though exactly how much is a secret. The question has irritated some Soviets because it would not be a secret if the amount were small. Even the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, on 6 August, 1986, raised the question with some indignation.

The Soviet Union encourages any striking spectator sport which can attract millions of people, make them drop what they are doing and admire the Soviet gymnasts, figure-skaters or acrobats. It also encourages all team games. Basketball, volleyball, water polo are all popular. The most aggressive of the team games, ice-hockey, is perhaps more of a national religion than is Communist ideology. Finally, it encourages any sport directly connected with the development of military skills: shooting, flying, gliding, parachute jumping, boxing, sambo, karate, the biathlon, the military triathlon, and so forth.

The most successful, richest and largest society in the Soviet Union concerned with sport is the Central Army Sports Club (ZSKA). Members of the club have included 850 European champions, 625 world champions and 182 Olympic champions. They have set up 341 European and 430 world records.¹

¹ All figures as of 1 January, 1979.

Such results do not indicate that the Soviet Army is the best at training top-class athletes. This was admitted even by *Pravda*.² The secret of success lies in the enormous resources of the Soviet Army. *Pravda* describes what happens: 'It is sufficient for some even slightly promising boxer to come on the scene and he is immediately lured across to the ZSKA.' As a result, out of the twelve best boxers in the Soviet Union ten are from the Army Club, one from *Dinamo* (the sports organisation run by the KGB), and one from the *Trud* sports club. But of those ten army boxers, not one was the original product of the Army club. They had all been lured away from other clubs — the *Trudoviye rezervy*, the *Spartak* or the *Burevestnik*. The same thing happens in ice-hockey, parachute jumping, swimming and many other sports.

² 2 September, 1985.

How does the army club manage to attract athletes to it? Firstly by giving them military rank. Any athlete who joins the ZSKA is given the rank of sergeant, sergeant-major, warrant officer or officer, depending on what level he is at. The better his

results as an athlete the higher the rank. Once he has a military rank an athlete is able to devote as much time to sport as he wishes and at the same time be regarded as an amateur, because professionally he is a soldier. Any Soviet 'amateur' athlete who performs slightly better than the average receives extra pay in various forms — 'for additional nourishment', 'for sports clothing', 'for travelling', and so forth. The 'amateur' receives for indulging in his sport much more than a doctor or a skilled engineer, so long as he achieves European standards. But the Soviet Army also pays him, and not badly, for his military rank and service.

The ZSKA is very attractive for an athlete in that, when he can no longer engage in his sport at international level, he can still retain his military rank and pay. In most other clubs he would be finished altogether. What has this policy produced? At the 14th winter Olympic Games, Soviet military athletes won seventeen gold medals. If one counts also the number of silver and bronze winners, the number of athletes with military rank is greatly increased. And if one were to draw up a similar list of military athletes at the summer Games it would take up many pages. Is there a single army in the world that comes near the Soviet Army in this achievement?

Now for another question: why is the Soviet Army so ready to hand out military ranks to athletes, to pay them a salary and provide them with the accommodation and privileges of army officers?

The answer is that the ZSKA and its numerous branches provide a base that *spetsnaz* uses for recruiting its best fighters. Naturally not every member of the ZSKA is a *spetsnaz* soldier. But the best athletes in ZSKA almost always are.

Spetsnaz is a mixture of sport, politics, espionage and armed terrorism. It is difficult to determine what takes precedence and what is subordinate to what, everything is so closely linked together.

In the first place the Soviet Union seeks international prestige in the form of gold medals at the Olympics. To achieve that it needs an organisation with the strictest discipline and rules, capable of squeezing every ounce of strength out of the athletes without ever letting them slack off.

In the second place the Soviet Army needs an enormous number of people with exceptional athletic ability at Olympic level to carry out special missions behind the enemy's lines. It is desirable that these people should be able to visit foreign countries in peace time. Sport makes that possible. As far as the athletes are concerned, they are grateful for a very rich club which can pay them well, provide them with cars and apartments, and arrange trips abroad for them. Moreover, they need the sort of club in which they can be regarded as amateurs, though they will work nowhere else but in the club.

Spetsnaz is the point where the interests of the state, the Soviet Army and military intelligence coincide with the interests of some individuals who want to devote their whole lives to sport.

After the Second World War, as a result of the experience gained, sports battalions were created by the headquarters of every military district, group of forces and fleet; at army and flotilla HQ level sports companies were formed. These huge sports formations were directly under the control of the Ministry of Defence. They provided the means of bringing together the best athletes whose job was to defend the sporting

honour of the particular army, flotilla, district, group or fleet in which they served. Some of the athletes were people called up for their military service, who left the Army once they had completed their service. But the majority remained in the military sports organisation for a long time with the rank of sergeant and higher. Soviet military intelligence chose its best men from the members of the sports units.

At the end of the 1960s it was recognised that a sports company or a sports battalion was too much of a contradiction in terms. It could arouse unnecessary attention from outsiders. So the sports units were disbanded and in their place came the sports teams. The change was purely cosmetic. The sports teams of the military districts, groups, fleets and so forth exist as independent units. The soldiers, sergeants, *praporshiki* and officers who belong to them are not serving in army regiments, brigades or divisions. Their service is in the sports team under the control of the district's headquarters. The majority of these sportsmen are carefully screened and recruited for *spetsnaz* training to carry out the most risky missions behind the enemy's lines. Usually they are all obliged to take part in parachute jumping, sambo, rifle-shooting, running and swimming, apart from their own basic sport.

A person looking at the teams of the military districts, groups and so forth with an untrained eye will notice nothing unusual. It is as though *spetsnaz* is a completely separate entity. Every athlete and every small group have their own individual tasks and get on with them: running, swimming, jumping and shooting. But later, in the evenings, in closed, well-guarded premises, they study topography, radio communications, engineering and other special subjects. They are regularly taken off secretly in ones and twos or groups, or even regiments to remote parts where they take part in exercises. Companies and regiments of professional athletes in *spetsnaz* exist only temporarily during the exercises and alerts, and they then quietly disperse, becoming again innocent sections and teams able at the right moment to turn into formidable fighting units.

According to Colonel-General Shatilov, the athlete is more energetic and braver in battle, has more confidence in his strength, is difficult to catch unawares, reacts quickly to changes of circumstance and is less liable to tire. There is no disputing this. A first-class athlete is primarily a person who possesses great strength of will, who has defeated his own laziness and cowardice, who has forced himself to run every day till he drops and has trained his muscles to a state of complete exhaustion. An athlete is a man infected by the spirit of competition and who desires victory in a competition or battle more than the average man.

In the sports sections and teams of the military districts, groups, armies, fleets, flotillas there is a very high percentage of women also engaged in sport and who defend the honour of their district, group and so forth. Like the men, the women are given military rank and, like the men, are recruited into *spetsnaz*.

There are no women in the usual *spetsnaz* units. But in the professional sports units of *spetsnaz* women constitute about half the numbers. They engage in various kinds of sport: parachute jumping, gliding, flying, shooting, running, swimming, motocross, and so on. Every woman who joins *spetsnaz* has to engage in some associated forms of sport apart from her own basic sport, and among these are some that are obligatory, such as sambo, shooting and a few others. The women have to take part in exercises along with the men and have to study the full syllabus of subjects necessary for operating behind the enemy's lines.

That there should be such a high percentage of women in the professional sports formations of *spetsnaz* is a matter of psychology and strategy: if in the course of a

war a group of tall, broadshouldered young men were to appear behind the lines this might give rise to bewilderment, since all the men are supposed to be at the front. But if in the same situation people were to see a group of athletic-looking girls there would be little likelihood of any alarm or surprise.

To be successful in war you have to have a very good knowledge of the natural conditions in the area in which you are to be operating: the terrain and the climate. You must have a good idea of the habits of the local population, the language and the possibilities of concealment; the forests, undergrowth, mountains, caves, and the obstacles to be overcome; the rivers, ravines and gullies. You must know the whereabouts of the enemy's military units and police, the tactics they employ and so forth.

A private in the average *spetsnaz* unit cannot, of course, visit the places where he is likely to have to fight in the event of war. But a top-class professional athlete does have the opportunity. The Soviet Army takes advantage of such opportunities.

For example, in 1984 the 12th world parachuting championship took place in France. There were altogether twenty-six gold medals to be competed for, and the Soviet team won twenty-two of them. The 'Soviet team' was in fact a team belonging to the armed forces of the USSR. It consisted of five men and five women: a captain, a senior *praporshik*, three *praporshiki*, a senior sergeant and four sergeants. The team's trainer, its doctor and the whole of the technical personnel were Soviet officers. The Soviet reporter accompanying the team was a colonel. This group of 'sportsmen' spent time in Paris and in the south of France. A very interesting and very useful trip, and there were other Soviet officers besides — for example a colonel who was the trainer of the Cuban team.

Now let us suppose a war has broken out. The Soviet Army must neutralise the French nuclear capability. France is the only country in Europe, apart from the Soviet Union itself, that stores strategic nuclear missiles in underground silos. The silos are an extremely important target, possibly the most important in Europe. The force that will put them out of action will be a *spetsnaz* force. And who will the Soviet high command send to carry out the mission? The answer is that, after the world parachuting championship, they have a tailor-made team.

It is often claimed that sport improves relations between countries. This is a strange argument. If it is the case, why did it not occur to anyone before the Second World War to invite German SS parachutists to their country to improve relations with the Nazis?

At the present time every country has good grounds for not receiving any Soviet military athletes on its own territory. The USSR should not be judged on its record. To take three cases: the Soviet Government sent troops into Czechoslovakia *temporarily*. We of course trust the statements made by the Soviet Government and know that after a certain time the Soviet troops will be withdrawn from Czechoslovakia. But until that happens there are sufficient grounds for 'temporarily' not allowing the Soviet Army into any free country.

Secondly, the Soviet Union introduced a 'limited' contingent of its troops into Afghanistan. The Soviet leaders' idea was that the word 'limited' would serve to reassure everyone — there would be grounds for concern if there were an 'unlimited' contingent of Soviet troops in Afghanistan. But so long as the 'limited' contingent of Soviet troops is still in Afghanistan it would not be a bad idea to limit the number of Soviet colonels, majors, captains and sergeants in the countries of the West, especially those wearing blue berets and little gilt parachute badges on their lapels. It

is those people in the blue berets who are killing children, women and old men in Afghanistan in the most brutal and ruthless way.

Thirdly, a Soviet pilot shot down a passenger plane with hundreds of people in it. After that, is there any sense in meeting Soviet airmen at international competitions and finding out who is better and who is worse? Surely the answer is clear, without any competition.

Sport is politics, and big-time sport is big-time politics. At the end of the last war the Soviet Union seized the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and the West has never recognised the Soviet Union's right to those territories. All right, said the Soviet leaders, if you won't recognise it *de jure*, recognise it *de facto*. A great deal has been done, some of it with the help of sport. During the Moscow Olympic Games some of the competitions took place in Moscow and some of them in the occupied territories of the Baltic states. At that time I talked to a number of Western politicians and sportsmen. I asked them: if the Soviet Union had occupied Sweden, would they have gone to the Olympic Games in Moscow? With one indignant voice they replied, 'No!' But if parts of the Games had taken place in Moscow and part in Stockholm would they have gone to occupied Stockholm? Here there was no limit to their indignation. They considered themselves people of character and they would never have gone to occupied countries. Then why, I asked, did they go to an Olympic Games, part of which took place in the occupied territory of the Baltic states? To that question I received no answer.

The units made up of professional athletes in *spetsnaz* are an elite within an elite. They are made up of far better human material (some of Olympic standard), enjoy incomparably better living conditions and many more privileges than other *spetsnaz* units.

In carrying out their missions the professional athletes have the right to make contact with *spetsnaz* agents on enemy territory and obtain help from them. They are in effect the advance guard for all the other *spetsnaz* formations. They are the first to be issued with latest weapons and equipment and the first to try out the newly devised and most risky kinds of operation. It is only after experiments have been carried out by the units of athletes that new weapons, equipment and ways of operating are adopted by regular *spetsnaz* units. Here is an example:

In my book *Aquarium*, first published in July 1985, I described the period of my life when I served as an officer of the Intelligence directorate of a military district and often had to act as the personal representative of the district's chief of intelligence with the *spetsnaz* groups. The period I described was identified: it was after my return from 'liberated' Czechoslovakia and before I entered the Military-Diplomatic Academy in the summer of 1970.

I described the ordinary *spetsnaz* units that I had to deal with. One group carried out a parachute jump from 100 metres. Each man had just one parachute: in that situation a spare one was pointless. The jump took place over snow. Throughout the book I refer only to one type of parachute: the D-1-8. Four months later, in the magazine *Sovetsky Voin* for November 1985, a Lieutenant-General Lisov published what might be called the pre-history of group parachute jumps by *spetsnaz* units from critically low levels. The General describes a group jump from a height of 100 metres in which each man had only one parachute, and he explains that a spare one is not needed. The jump takes place over snow. The article refers to only one type of parachute — the D-1-8.

General Lisov was describing trials which were carried out from October 1967 to March 1968. The General did not, of course, say why the trials were carried out and the word *spetsnaz* was not, of course, used. But he underlined the fact that the trial was not conducted because it had any connection with sport. On the contrary, according to the rules laid down by the international sports bodies at that time, anyone who during a contest opened his parachute less than 400 metres from the ground was disqualified.

General Lisov conducted the trial contrary to all rules of the sport and not to demonstrate sporting prowess. The military athletes left the aircraft at a height of 100 metres, so their parachutes must have opened even lower down. The group jump took place simultaneously from several aircraft, with the parachutists leaving their plane at about one-second intervals. Each of them was in the air for between 9.5 and 13 seconds. General Lisov summed it up like this: 100 metres, 50 men, 23 seconds. An amazing result by any standards.

The fifty men symbolised the fifty years of the Soviet Army. It was planned to carry out the jump of 23 February, 1968, on the Army's anniversary, but because of the weather it was postponed till 1 March.

I could not have known at that time about General Lisov's trials. But it is now clear to me that the tactic that was being developed in the *spetsnaz* fighting units in 1969-70 had been initiated by professional military athletes a year before.

This dangerous stunt was carried out in my ordinary *spetsnaz* unit in rather simpler conditions: we jumped in a group of thirteen men from the wide rear door of an Antonov-12 aircraft. The professionals described by General Lisov jumped from the narrow side doors of an Antonov-2, which is more awkward and dangerous. The professionals made the jump in a much bigger group, more closely together and with greater accuracy.

In spite of the fact that the ordinary *spetsnaz* units did not succeed and will never succeed in achieving results comparable with those of the professional athletes, nevertheless the idea of the group jump from a height of a hundred metres provided the fighting units with an exceptionally valuable technique. The special troops are on the ground before the planes have vanished over the horizon, and they are ready for action before the enemy has had time to grasp what is happening. They need this technique to be able to attack the enemy without any warning at all. That is the reason for taking such a risk.

During a war the fighting units of *spetsnaz* will be carrying out missions behind the enemy's lines. Surely the units of professional athletes, which are capable of carrying out extremely dangerous work with even greater precision and speed than the ordinary *spetsnaz* units, should not be left unemployed in wartime?

Before leaving the subject entirely, I would like to add a few words about another use of Soviet athletes for terrorist operations. Not only the Soviet Army but also the Soviet state's punitive apparatus (known at various times as the NKVD, the MGB, the MVD and the KGB) has its own sports organisation, *Dinamo*. Here are some illustrations of its practical application.

`When the war broke out the «pure» parachutists disappeared, Anna Shishmareva joined the OMSBON.'<sup>3</sup> Anna Shishmareva is a famous Soviet woman athlete of the pre-war period, while OMSBON was a brigade of the NKVD's *osnaz* which I have already referred to. Another example: `Among the people in our *osoby*, as our unit was called, were many athletes, record holders and Soviet champions famous before

the war.⁴ Finally: Boris Galushkin, the outstanding Soviet boxer of the pre-war period, was a lieutenant and worked as an interrogator in the NKVD. During the war he went behind the enemy lines in one of the *osnaz* units.

I have quite a few examples in my collection. But the KGB and the *Dinamo* sports club are not my field of interest. I hope that one of the former officers of the KGB who has fled to the West will write in greater detail about the use of athletes in the Soviet secret police.

However, I must also make mention of the very mysterious Soviet sporting society known as *Zenit*. Officially it belongs to the ministry for the aircraft industry. But there are some quite weighty reasons for believing that there is somebody else behind the club. The *Zenit* cannot be compared with the ZSKA or *Dinamo* in its sporting results or its popularity. But it occasionally displays a quite unusual aggressiveness in its efforts to acquire the best athletes. The style and the general direction of the training in the *Zenit* are very militarised and very similar to what goes on in the ZSKA and *Dinamo*. *Zenit* deserves greater attention than it has been shown. It is just possible that the researcher who studied *Zenit* and its connections seriously will make some surprising discoveries.

³ *Sovetsky Voin*, No. 20, 1985.

⁴ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 22 May, 1985.

Chapter 7. Selection and Training

Between soldiers and their officers are the sergeants, an intermediate rank with its own internal seniority of junior sergeants, full sergeants, senior sergeant and *starshina*. The training of the sergeants is of critical importance in *spetsnaz* where discipline and competence are required to an even more stringent degree than in the everyday life of the armed forces.

In normal circumstances training is carried out by special training divisions. Each of these has a permanent staff, a general, officers, warrant officers and sergeants and a limited number of soldiers in support units. Every six months the division receives 10,000 recruits who are distributed among the regiments and battalions on a temporary basis. After five months of harsh training these young soldiers receive their sergeants' stripes and are sent out to regular divisions. It takes a month to distribute the young sergeants to the regular forces, to prepare the training base for the new input and to receive a fresh contingent. After that the training programme is repeated. Thus each training division is a gigantic incubator producing 20,000 sergeants a year. A training division is organised in the usual way: three motorised rifle regiments, a tank regiment, an artillery regiment, an anti-aircraft regiment, a missile battalion and so forth. Each regiment and battalion trains specialists in its own field, from infantry sergeants to land surveyors, topographers and signallers.

A training division is a means of mass-producing sergeants for a gigantic army which in peacetime has in its ranks around five million men but which in case of war increases considerably in size. There is one shortcoming in this mass production. The selection of sergeants is not carried out by the commanders of the regular divisions but by local military agencies — the military commissariats and the mobilisation officers of the military districts. This selection cannot be, and is not, qualitative. When

they receive instructions from their superiors the local authorities simply despatch several truckloads or trainloads of recruits.

Having received its 10,000 recruits, who are no different from any others, the training division has in five months to turn them into commanders and specialists. A certain number of the new recruits are sent straight off to the regular divisions on the grounds that they are not at all suitable for being turned into commanders. But the training division has very strict standards and cannot normally send more than five percent of its intake to regular divisions. Then, in exchange for those who were sent straight off, others arrive, but they are not much better in quality than those sent away, so the officers and sergeants of the training division have to exert all their ability, all their fury and inventiveness, to turn these people into sergeants.

The selection of future sergeants for *spetsnaz* takes place in a different way which is much more complicated and much more expensive. All the recruits to *spetsnaz* (after a very careful selection) join fighting units, where the company commander and platoon commanders put their young soldiers through a very tough course. This initial period of training for new recruits takes place away from other soldiers. During the course the company commander and the platoon commanders very carefully select (because they are vitally interested in the matter) those who appear to be born leaders. There are a lot of very simple devices for doing this. For example, a group of recruits is given the job of putting up a tent in a double quick time, but no leader is appointed among them. In a relatively simple operation someone has to co-ordinate the actions of the rest. A very short time is allowed for the work to be carried out and severe punishment is promised if the work is badly done or not completed on time. Within five minutes the group has appointed its own leader. Again, a group may be given the task of getting from one place to another by a very complicated and confused route without losing a single man. And again the group will soon appoint its own leader. Every day, every hour and every minute of the soldier's time is taken up with hard work, lessons, running, jumping, overcoming obstacles, and practically all the time the group is without a commander. In a few days of very intensive training the company commander and platoon commanders pick out the most intelligent, most imaginative, strongest, most brash and energetic in the group. After completing the course the majority of recruits finish up in sections and platoons of the same company, but the best of them are sent thousands of kilometres away to one of the *spetsnaz* training battalions where they become sergeants. Then they return to the companies they came from.

It is a very long road for the recruit. But it has one advantage: the potential sergeant is not selected by the local military authority nor even by the training unit, but by a regular officer at a very low level — at platoon or company level. What is more, the selection is made on a strictly individual basis and by the very same officer who will in five months' time receive the man he has selected back again, now equipped with sergeant's stripes.

It is impossible, of course, to introduce such a system into the whole of the Soviet Armed Forces. It involves transporting millions of men from one place to another. In all other branches the path of the future sergeant from where he lives follows this plan: training division — regular division. In *spetsnaz* the plan is: regular unit — training unit — regular unit.

There is yet another difference of principle. If any other branch of the services needs a sergeant the military commissariat despatches a recruit to the training division, which has to make him into a sergeant. But if *spetsnaz* needs a sergeant the company commander sends three of his best recruits to the *spetsnaz* training unit.

The *spetsnaz* training battalion works on the principle that before you start giving orders, you have to learn to obey them. The whole of the thinking behind the training battalions can be put very simply. They say that if you make an empty barrel airtight and drag it down below the water and then let it go it shoots up and out above the surface of the water. The deeper it is dragged down the faster it rises and the further it jumps out of the water. This is how the training battalions operate. Their task is to drag their ever-changing body of men deeper down.

Each *spetsnaz* training battalion has its permanent staff of officers, warrant officers and sergeants and receives its intake of 300-400 *spetsnaz* recruits who have already been through a recruit's course in various *spetsnaz* units.

The regime in the normal Soviet training divisions can only be described as brutal. I experienced it first as a student in a training division. I have already described the conditions within *spetsnaz*. To appreciate what conditions are like in a *spetsnaz* training battalion, the brutality has to be multiplied many times over.

In the *spetsnaz* training battalions the empty barrel is dragged so far down into the deep that it is in danger of bursting from external pressure. A man's dignity is stripped from him to such an extent that it is kept constantly at the very brink, beyond which lies suicide or the murder of his officer. The officers and sergeants of the training battalions are, every one of them, enthusiasts for their work. Anyone who does like this work will not stand it for so long but goes off voluntarily to other easier work in *spetsnaz* regular units. The only people who stay in the training battalions are those who derive great pleasure from their work. Their work is to issue orders by which they make or break the strongest of characters. The commander's work is constantly to see before him dozens of men, each of whom has one thought in his head: to kill himself or to kill his officer? The work for those who enjoy it provides complete moral and physical satisfaction, just as a stuntman might derive satisfaction from leaping on a motorcycle over nineteen coaches. The difference between the stuntman risking his neck and the commander of a *spetsnaz* training unit lies in the fact that the former experiences his satisfaction for a matter of a few seconds, while the latter experiences it all the time.

Every soldier taken into a training battalion is given a nickname, almost invariably sarcastic. He might be known as The Count, The Duke, Caesar, Alexander of Macedon, Louis XI, Ambassador, Minister of Foreign Affairs, or any variation on the theme. He is treated with exaggerated respect, not given orders, but asked for his opinion:

`Would Your Excellency be of a mind to clean the toilet with his toothbrush?'

`Illustrious Prince, would you care to throw up in public what you ate at lunch?'

In *spetsnaz* units men are fed much better than in any other units of the armed forces, but the workload is so great that the men are permanently hungry, even if they do not suffer the unofficial but very common punishment of being forced to empty their stomachs:

`You're on the heavy side, Count, after your lunch! Would you care to stick two fingers down your throat? That'll make things easier!'

The more humiliating the forms of punishment a sergeant thinks up for the men under him, and the more violently he attacks their dignity, the better. The task of the training battalions is to crush and completely destroy the individual, however strong a character he may have possessed, and to fashion out of that person a type to fit the standards of *spetsnaz*, a type who will be filled with an explosive charge of hatred and spite and a craving for revenge.

The main difficulty in carrying out this act of human engineering is to turn the fury of the young soldier in the right direction. He has to have been reduced to the lowest limits of his dignity and then, at precisely the point when he can take no more, he can be given his sergeant's stripes and sent off to serve in a regular unit. There he can begin to work off his fury on his own subordinates, or better still on the enemies of Communism.

The training units of *spetsnaz* are a place where they tease a recruit like a dog, working him into a rage and then letting him off the leash. It is not surprising that fights inside *spetsnaz* are a common occurrence. Everyone, especially those who have served in a *spetsnaz* training unit, bears within himself a colossal charge of malice, just as a thunder cloud bears its charge of electricity. It is not surprising that for a *spetsnaz* private, or even more so for a sergeant, war is just a beautiful dream, the time when he is at last allowed to release his full charge of malice.

Apart from the unending succession of humiliations, insults and punishments handed out by the commanders, the man serving in a *spetsnaz* training unit has continually to wage a no less bitter battle against his own comrades who are in identical circumstances to his own.

In the first place there is a silent competition for pride of place, for the leadership in each group of people. In *spetsnaz*, as we have seen, this struggle has assumed open and very dramatic forms. Apart from this natural battle for first place there exists an even more serious incentive. It derives from the fact that for every sergeant's place in a *spetsnaz* training battalion there are three candidates being trained at the same time. Only the very best will be made sergeant at the end of five months. On passing out some are given the rank of junior sergeant, while others are not given any rank at all and remain as privates in the ranks. It is a bitter tragedy for a man to go through all the ordeals of a *spetsnaz* training battalion and not to receive any rank but to return to his unit as a private at the end of it.

The decision whether to promote a man to sergeant after he has been through the training course is made by a commission of GRU officers or the Intelligence Directorate of the military district in whose territory the particular battalion is stationed. The decision is made on the basis of the result of examinations conducted in the presence of the commission, on the main subjects studied: political training; the tactics of *spetsnaz* (including knowledge of the probable enemy and the main targets that *spetsnaz* operates); weapons training (knowledge of *spetsnaz* armament, firing from various kinds of weapons including foreign weapons, and the use of explosives); parachute training; physical training; and weapons of mass destruction and defence against them.

The commission does not distinguish between the soldiers according to where they have come from, but only according to their degree of readiness to carry out missions. Consequently, when the men who have passed out are returned to their units there may arise a lack of balance among them. For example, a *spetsnaz* company that sends nine privates to a training battalion in the hope of receiving three sergeants back after five months, could receive one sergeant, one junior sergeant and seven privates, or five sergeants, three junior sergeants and one private. This system has been introduced quite deliberately. The officer commanding a regular company, with nine trained men to choose from, puts only the very best in charge of his sections. He can put anybody he pleases into the vacancies without reference to his rank. Privates who have been through the training battalion can be appointed commanders of sections.

Sergeants and junior sergeants for whom there are not enough posts as commanders will carry out the work of privates despite their sergeant's rank.

The *spetsnaz* company commander may also have, apart from the freshly trained men, sergeants and privates who completed their training earlier but were not appointed to positions as commanders. Consequently the company commander can entrust the work of commanding sections to any of them, while all the new arrivals from the training battalion can be used as privates.

The private or junior sergeant who is appointed to command a section has to struggle to show his superiors that he really is worthy of that trust and that he really is the best. If he succeeds in doing so he will in due course be given the appropriate rank. If he is unworthy he will be removed. There are always candidates for his job.

This system has two objectives: the first is to have within the *spetsnaz* regular units a large reserve of commanders at the very lowest level. During a war *spetsnaz* will suffer tremendous losses. In every section there are always a minimum of two fully trained men capable of taking command at any moment; the second is to generate a continual battle between sergeants for the right to be a commander. Every commander of a section or deputy commander of a platoon can be removed at any time and replaced by someone more worthy of the job. The removal of a sergeant from a position of command is carried out on the authority of the company commander (if it is a separate *spetsnaz* company) or on the authority of the battalion commander or regiment. When he is removed the former commander is reduced to the status of a private soldier. He *may* retain his rank, or his rank may be reduced, or he may lose the rank of sergeant altogether.

The training of officers for *spetsnaz* often take place at a special faculty of the Lenin Komsomol Higher Airborne Command School in Ryazan. Great care is taken over their selection for the school. The ones who join the faculty are among the very best. The four years of gruelling training are also four years of continual testing and selection to establish whether the students are capable of becoming *spetsnaz* officers or not. When they have completed their studies at the special faculty some of them are posted to the airborne troops or the air assault troops. Only the very best are posted to *spetsnaz*, and even then a young officer can at any moment be sent off into the airborne forces. Only those who are absolutely suitable remain in *spetsnaz*. Other officers are appointed from among the men passing out from other command schools who have never previously heard of *spetsnaz*.

The heads of the GRU consider that special training is necessary for every function, except that of leader. A leader cannot be produced by even the best training scheme. A leader is born a leader and nobody can help him or advise him how to manage people. In this case advice offered by professors does not help; it only hinders. A professor is a man who has never been a leader and never will be, and nobody ever taught Hitler how to lead a nation. Stalin was thrown out of his theological seminary. Marshal Georgi Zhukov, the outstanding military leader of the Second World War, had a million men, and often several million, under his direct command practically throughout the war. Of all the generals and marshals at his level he was the only one who did not suffer a single defeat in battle. Yet he had no real military education. He did not graduate from a military school to become a junior officer; he did not graduate from a military academy to become a senior officer; and he did not graduate from the Academy of General Staff to become a general and later a marshal. But he became one just the same. There was Khalkhin-Gol, Yelnya, the counter-offensive before Moscow, Stalingrad, the lifting of the Leningrad blockade, Kursk, the crossing of the

Dnieper, the Belorussian operation, and the Vistula-Oder and Berlin operations. What need had he of education? What could the professors teach him?

The headquarters of every military district has a Directorate for Personnel, which does a tremendous amount of work on officers' records and on the studying, selecting and posting of officers. On instructions from the chief of staff of the military district the Directorate for Personnel of each district will do a search for officers who come up to the *spetsnaz* standard.

The criteria which the Intelligence directorate sends to the Directorate of Personnel are top secret. But one can easily tell by looking at the officers of *spetsnaz* the qualities which they certainly possess.

The first and most important of them are of course a strong, unbending character and the marks of a born leader. Every year thousands of young officers with all kinds of specialities — from the missile forces, the tank troops, the infantry, the engineers and signallers pass through the Personnel directorate of each military district. Each officer is preceded by his dossier in which a great deal is written down. But that is not the decisive factor. When he arrives in the Directorate for Personnel the young officer is interviewed by several experienced officers specialising in personnel matters. It is in the course of these interviews that a man of really remarkable personality stands out, with dazzling clarity, from the mass of thousands of other strong-willed and physically powerful men. When the personnel officers discover him, the interviewing is taken over by other officers of the Intelligence directorate and it is they who will very probably offer him a suitable job.

But officers for *spetsnaz* are occasionally not selected when they pass through the Personnel directorate. They pass through the interviewing process without distinguishing themselves in any way, and are given jobs as commanders. Then stories may begin to circulate through the regiment, division, army and district to the effect that such and such a young commander is a brute, ready to attack anyone, but holds his own, performs miracles, has turned a backward platoon into a model unit, and so forth. The man is rapidly promoted and can be sure of being appointed to a penal battalion — not to be punished, but to take charge of the offenders. At this point the Intelligence directorate takes a hand in the matter. If the officer is in command of a penal platoon or company and he is tough enough to handle really difficult men without being scared of them or fearing to use his own strength, he will be weighed up very carefully for a job.

There is one other way in which officers are chosen. Every officer with his unit has to mount guard for the garrison and patrol the streets and railway stations in search of offenders. The military commandant of the town and the officer commanding the garrison (the senior military man in town) see these officers every day. Day after day they take over the duty from another officer, perform it for twenty-four hours and then hand over to another officer. The system has existed for decades and all serving officers carry out these duties several times a year. It is the right moment to study their characters.

Say a drunken private is hauled into the guardroom. One officer will say, 'Pour ice-cold water over him and throw him in a cell!' Another officer will behave differently. When he sees the drunken soldier, his reaction will be along the lines of: 'Just bring him in here! Shut the door and cover him with a wet blanket (so as not to leave any marks). I'll teach him a lesson! Kick him in the guts! That'll teach him not to drink next time. Now lads, beat him up as best you can. Go on! I'd do the same to you, my boys! Now wipe him off with snow.' It needs little imagination to see which of the

officers is regarded more favourably by his superiors. The Intelligence directorate doesn't need very many people — just the best.

The second most important quality is physical endurance. An officer who is offered a post is likely to be a runner, swimmer, skier or athlete in some form of sport demanding long and very concentrated physical effort. And a third factor is the physical dimensions of the man. Best of all is that he should be an enormous hulk with vast shoulders and huge fists. But this factor can be ignored if a man appears of small build and no broad shoulders but with a really strong character and a great capacity for physical endurance. Such a person is taken in, of course. The long history of mankind indicates that strong characters are met with no less frequently among short people than among giants.

Any young officer can be invited to join *spetsnaz* irrespective of his previous speciality in the armed forces. If he possesses the required qualities of an iron will, an air of unquestionable authority, ruthlessness and an independent way of taking decisions and acting, if he is by nature a gambler who is not afraid to take a chance with anything, including his own life, then he will eventually be invited to the headquarters of the military district. He will be led along the endless corridors to a little office where he will be interviewed by a general and some senior officers. The young officer will not of course know that the general is head of the Intelligence directorate of the military district or that the colonel next to him is head of the third department (*spetsnaz*) of the directorate.

The atmosphere of the interview is relaxed, with smiles and jokes on both sides. 'Tell us about yourself, lieutenant. What are your interests? What games do you play? You hold the divisional record on skis over ten kilometres? Very good. How did your men do in the last rifle-shooting test? How do you get along with your deputy? Is he a difficult chap? Uncontrolled character? Our information is that you tamed him. How did you manage it?'

The interview moves gradually on to the subject of the armed forces of the probable enemy and takes the form of a gentle examination.

'You have an American division facing your division on the front. The American division has «Lance» missiles. A nasty thing?'

'Of course, comrade general.'

'Just supposing, lieutenant, that you were chief of staff of the Soviet division, how would you destroy the enemy's missiles?'

'With our own 9K21 missiles.'

'Very good, lieutenant, but the location of the American missiles is not known.'

'I would ask the air force to locate them and possibly bomb them.'

'But there's bad weather, lieutenant, and the anti-aircraft defences are strong.'

'Then I would send forward from our division a deep reconnaissance company to find the missiles, cut the throats of the missile crew and blow up the missiles.'

'Not a bad idea. Very good, in fact. Have you ever heard, lieutenant, that there are units in the American Army known as the «Green Berets»?'

'Yes, I have heard.'

'What do you think of them?'

'I look at the question from two points of view — the political and the military.'

'Tell us both of them, please.'

'They are mercenary cutthroats of American capitalism, looters, murderers and rapists. They burn down villages and massacre the inhabitants, women, children and old people.'

`Enough. Your second point of view?'

`They are marvellously well-trained units for operating behind the enemy's lines. Their job is to paralyse the enemy's system of command and control. They are a very powerful and effective instrument in the hands of commanders....'

`Very well. So what would you think, lieutenant, if we were to organise something similar in our army?'

`I think, comrade general, that it would be a correct decision. I am sure, comrade general, that that is our army's tomorrow.'

`It's the army's today, lieutenant. What would you say if we were to offer you the chance to become an officer in these troops? The discipline is like iron. Your authority as a commander would be almost absolute. You would be the one taking the decisions, not your superiors for you.'

`If I were to be offered such an opportunity, comrade general, I would accept.'

`All right, lieutenant, now you can go back to your regiment. Perhaps you will receive an offer. Continue your service and forget this conversation took place. You realise, of course, what will happen to you if anybody gets to know about what we have discussed?'

`I understand, comrade general.'

`We have informed your commanding officers, including the regimental commander, that you came before us as a candidate for posting to the Chinese frontier — to Mongolia, Afghanistan, the islands of the Arctic Ocean — that sort of thing. Goodbye for now, lieutenant.'

`Goodbye, comrade general.'

An officer who joins *spetsnaz* from another branch of the armed forces does not have to go through any additional training course. He is posted straight to a regular unit and is given command of a platoon. I was present many times at exercises where a young officer who had taken over a platoon knew a lot less about *spetsnaz* than many of his men and certainly his sergeants. But a young commander learns quickly, along with the privates. There is nothing to be ashamed of in learning. The officer could not know anything about the technique and tactics of *spetsnaz*.

It is not unusual for a young officer in these circumstances to begin a lesson, announce the subject and purpose of it, and then order the senior sergeant to conduct the lesson while he takes up position in the ranks along with the young privates. His platoon will already have a sense of the firmness of the commander's character. The men will already know that the commander is the leader of the platoon, the one unquestionable leader. There are questions he cannot yet answer and equipment he cannot yet handle. But they all know that, if it is a question of running ten kilometres, their new commander will be among the first home, and if it is a question of firing from a weapon their commander will of course be the best. In a few weeks the young officer will make his first parachute jump along with the youngest privates. He will be given the chance to jump as often as he likes. The company commander and the other officers will help him to understand what he did not know before. At night he will read his top secret instructions and a month later he will be ready to challenge any of his sergeants to a contest. A few months later he will be the best in all matters and will teach his platoon by simply giving them the most confident of all commands: `Do as I do!'

An officer who gets posted to *spetsnaz* from other branches of the forces without having had any special training is of course an unusual person. The officers commanding *spetsnaz* seek out such people and trust them. Experience shows that

these officers without special training produce much better results than those who have graduated from the special faculty at the Higher Airborne Command school. There is nothing surprising or paradoxical about this. If Mikhail Koshkin had had special training in designing tanks he would never have created the T-34 tank, the best in the world. Similarly, if someone had decided to teach Mikhail Kalashnikov how to design a sub-machine-gun the teaching might easily have ruined a self-educated genius.

The officers commanding the GRU believe that strong and independent people must be found and told what to do, leaving them with the right to choose which way to carry out the task given them. That is why the instructions for *spetsnaz* tactics are so short. All Soviet regulations are in general much shorter than those in Western armies, and a Soviet commander is guided by them less frequently than his opposite member in the West.

The officer of powerful build is only one type of *spetsnaz* officer. There is another type, whose build, width of shoulder and so forth are not taken into account, although the man must be no less strong of character. This type might be called the 'intelligentsia' of *spetsnaz*, and it includes officers who are not directly involved with the men in the ranks and who work with their heads far more than with their hands.

There is, of course, no precise line drawn between the two types. Take, for example, the officer-interpreters who would seem to belong to the 'intelligentsia' of *spetsnaz*. There is an officer-interpreter, with a fluent knowledge of at least two foreign languages, in every *spetsnaz* company. His contact with the men in the company exists mainly because he teaches them foreign languages. But, as we know, this is not a subject that takes much time for the *spetsnaz* soldier. The interpreter is constantly at the company commander's side, acting as his unofficial adjutant. At first glance he is an 'intellectual'. But that is just the first impression. The fact is that the interpreter jumps along with the company and spends many days with it plodding across marshes and mountains, sand and snow. The interpreter is the first to drive nails into the heads of enemy prisoners to get the necessary information out of them. That is his work: to drag out finger-nails, cut tongues in half (known as 'making a snake') and stuff hot coals into prisoners' mouths. Military interpreters for the Soviet armed forces are trained at the Military Institute.

Among the students at the Institute there are those who are physically strong and tough, with strong nerves and characters of granite. These are the ones invited to join *spetsnaz*. Consequently, although the interpreter is sometimes regarded as a representative of the 'intelligentsia', it is difficult to distinguish him by appearance from the platoon commanders of the company in which he serves. His job is not simply to ask questions and wait for an answer. His job is to get the *right* answer. Upon that depends the success of the mission and the lives of an enormous number of people. He has to force the prisoner to talk if he does not want to, and having received an answer the interpreter must extract from the prisoner confirmation that it is the only right answer. That is why he has to apply not very 'intellectual' methods to his prisoner. With that in mind the interpreters in *spetsnaz* can be seen as neither commanders nor intellectuals, but a link between the two classes.

Pure representatives of *spetsnaz* 'intelligentsia' are found among the officers of the *spetsnaz* intelligence posts. They are selected from various branches, and their physical development is not a key factor. They are officers who have already been through the military schools and have served for not less than two years. After posting to the third faculty of the Military-Diplomatic Academy, they work in

intelligence posts (RPs) and centres (RZs). Their job is to look for opportunities for recruitment and to direct the agent network. Some of them work with the agent-informer network, some with the *spetsnaz* network.

An officer working with the *spetsnaz* agent network is a *spetsnaz* officer in the full sense. But he is not dropped by parachute and he does not have to run, fight, shoot or cut people's throats. His job is to study the progress of thousands of people and discover among them individuals suitable for *spetsnaz*; to seek a way of approaching them and getting to know them; to establish and develop relations with them; and then to recruit them. These officers wear civilian clothes most of the time, and if they have to wear military uniform they wear the uniform of the branch in which they previously served: artillery, engineering troops, the medical service. Or they wear the uniform of the unit within which the secret intelligence unit of *spetsnaz* is concealed.

The senior command of *spetsnaz* consists of colonels and generals of the GRU who have graduated from one of the main faculties of the Military-Diplomatic Academy — that is, the first or second faculties, and have worked for many years in the central *apparat* of the GRU and in its *rezidenturas* abroad. Each one of them has a first-class knowledge of a country or group of countries because of working abroad for a long time. If there is a possibility of continuing to work abroad he will do so. But circumstances may mean that further trips abroad are impossible. In that case he continues to serve in the central *apparat* of the GRU or in an Intelligence directorate of a military district, fleet or group of forces. He then has control of all the instruments of intelligence, including *spetsnaz*.

I frequently came across people of this class. In every case they were men who were silent and unsociable. They have elegant exteriors, good command of foreign languages and refined manners. They hold tremendous power in their hands and know how to handle authority.

Some however, are men who have never attended the Academy and have never been in countries regarded as potential enemies. They have advanced upwards thanks to their inborn qualities, to useful contacts which they know how to arrange and support, to their own striving for power, and to their continual and successful struggle for power which is full of cunning tricks and tremendous risks. They are intoxicated by power and the struggle for power. It is their only aim in life and they go at it, scrambling over the slippery slopes and summits. One of the elements of success in their life's struggle is of course the state of the units entrusted to them and their readiness at any moment to carry out any mission set by the higher command. No senior official in *spetsnaz* can be held up by considerations of a moral, juridical or any other kind. His upward flight or descent depends entirely on how a mission is carried out. You may be sure that *any* mission will be carried out at *any* cost and by *any* means.

I often hear it said that the Soviet soldier is a very bad soldier because he serves for only two years in the army. Some Western experts consider it impossible to produce a good soldier in such a short time.

It is true that the Soviet soldier is a conscript, but it must be remembered that he is conscript in a totally militarised country. It is sufficient to remember that even the leaders of the party in power in the Soviet Union have the military ranks of generals and marshals. The whole of Soviet society is militarised and swamped with military propaganda. From a very early age Soviet children engage in war games in a very serious way, often using real submachine guns (and sometimes even fighting tanks), under the direction of officers and generals of the Soviet Armed Forces.

Those children who show a special interest in military service join the Voluntary Society for Co-operation with the Army, Air Force and Fleet, known by its Russian initial letters as DOSAAF. DOSAAF is a para-military organisation with 15 million members who have regular training in military trades and engage in sports with a military application. DOSAAF not only trains young people for military service; it also helps reservists to maintain their qualifications after they have completed their service. DOSAAF has a colossal budget, a widespread network of airfields and training centres and clubs of various sizes and uses which carry out elementary and advanced training of military specialists of every possible kind, from snipers to radio operators, from fighter pilots to underwater swimmers, from glider pilots to astronauts, and from tank drivers to the people who train military doctors.

Many outstanding Soviet airmen, the majority of the astronauts (starting with Yuri Gagarin), famous generals and European and world champions in military types of sport began their careers in DOSAAF, often at the age of fourteen.

The men in charge of DOSAAF locally are retired officers, generals and admirals, but the men in charge at the top of DOSAAF are generals and marshals on active service. Among the best-known leaders of the society were Army-General A. L. Getman, Marshal of the Air Force A. I. Pokryshkin, Army-General D. D. Lelyushenko and Admiral of the Fleet G. Yegorov. Traditionally the top leadership of DOSAAF includes leaders of the GRU and *spetsnaz*. At the present time (1986), for example, the first deputy chairman of DOSAAF is Colonel-General A. Odintsev. As long ago as 1941 he was serving in a *spetsnaz* detachment on the Western Front. The detachment was under the command of Artur Sprogis. Throughout his life Odintsev has been directly connected with the GRU and terrorism. At the present time his main job is to train young people of both sexes for the ordeal of fighting a war. The most promising of them are later sent to serve in *spetsnaz*.

When we speak about the Soviet conscript soldiers, and especially those who were taken into *spetsnaz*, we must remember that each one of them has already been through three or four years of intensive military training, has already made parachute jumps, fired a sub-machine gun and been on a survival course. He has already developed stamina, strength, drive and the determination to conquer. The difference between him and a regular soldier in the West lies in the fact that the regular soldier is paid for his efforts. Our young man gets no money. He is a fanatic and an enthusiast. He has to pay himself (though only a nominal sum) for being taught how to use a knife, a silenced pistol, a spade and explosives.

After completing his service in *spetsnaz* the soldier either becomes a regular soldier or he returns to 'peaceful' work and in his spare time attends one of the many DOSAAF clubs. Here is a typical example: Sergei Chizhik was born in 1965. While still at school he joined the DOSAAF club. He made 120 parachute jumps. Then he was called into the Army and served with special troops in Afghanistan. He distinguished himself in battle, and completed his service in 1985. In May 1986 he took part in a DOSAAF team in experiments in surviving in Polar conditions. As one of a group of Soviet 'athletes' he dropped by parachute on the North Pole.

DOSAAF is a very useful organisation for *spetsnaz* in many ways. The Soviet Union has signed a convention undertaking not to use the Antarctic for military purposes. But in the event of war it will of course be used by the military, and for that reason the corresponding experience has to be gained. That is why the training for a parachute drop on the South Pole in the Antarctic is being planned out by *spetsnaz* but to be carried out by DOSAAF. The difference is only cosmetic: the men who make the jump will be the very same cutthroats as went through the campaigns in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. They are now considered to be civilians, but they are under the complete control of generals like Odintsev, and in

wartime they will become the very same *spetsnaz* troops as we now label contemptuously 'conscripts'.

Chapter 8. The Agent Network

Soviet military intelligence controls an enormous number of secret agents, who, in this context, are foreigners who have been recruited by the Soviet intelligence services and who carry out tasks for those services. They can be divided into two networks, the strategic and the operational. The first is recruited by the central *apparat* of the GRU and the GRU's numerous branches within the country and abroad. It works for the General Staff of the armed forces of the USSR and its agents are recruited mainly in the capitals of hostile states or in Moscow. The second is recruited by the intelligence directorates of fronts, fleets, groups of forces, military districts and the intelligence departments of armies and flotillas, independently of the central GRU *apparat*, and its agents serve the needs of a particular front, fleet, army and so on. They are recruited mainly from the territory of the Soviet Union or from countries friendly to it.

The division of agents into strategic and operational networks does not in any way indicate a difference in quality. The central *apparat* of the GRU naturally has many more agents than any military district group of forces, in fact more than all the fleets, military district armies and so forth put together. They are, broadly speaking, people who have direct access to official secrets. Nevertheless the operational network has also frequently obtained information of interest not just to local commanders but also to the top Soviet leadership.

During the Second World War the information coming from the majority of foreign capitals was not of interest to the Soviet Union. Useful information came from a very small number of locations, but however vital it was, it was insufficient to satisfy wartime demands. Consequently the operational network of the armies, fronts and fleets increased many times in size during the war and came to be of greater importance than the strategic network of agents of the central GRU *apparat*. This could happen again in another full-scale war if, contrary to the military and political consensus on future wars, it proved to be long drawn-out.

The *spetsnaz* agent network, an *operational* one, works for every military district, group of forces, fleet and front (which all have in addition an information network). Recruitment of agents is carried out mainly from the territory of the Soviet Union and states friendly to it. The main places where *spetsnaz* looks out for likely candidates for recruitment are: major ports visited by foreign tourists; and among foreign students. *Spetsnaz* examines the correspondence of Soviet citizens and of citizens of the satellite countries and listens in to the telephone conversations in the hope of coming across interesting contacts between Soviet and East European citizens and people living in countries that *spetsnaz* is interested in. Usually a foreign person who has been recruited can be persuaded to recruit several other people who may never have been in the Soviet Union or had any contact with Soviet citizens. It sometimes happens that *spetsnaz* officers turn up in somebody else's territory and recruit agents. Most of them do not have diplomatic cover and do not recruit agents in the capital cities, but drop off from Soviet merchant and fishing vessels in foreign ports and appear in the foreign country as drivers of Soviet trucks, Aeroflot pilots or stewards of Soviet trains. One proven place for recruiting is a Soviet cruise ship: two weeks at sea, vodka, caviar, the *dolce vita*, pleasant company and the ability to talk without fearing the local police.

If the reader had access to real dossiers on the secret agents of *spetsnaz* he would be disappointed and probably shocked, because the agents of *spetsnaz* bear no resemblance to the fine, upstanding, young and handsome heroes of spy films. Soviet military intelligence is looking for an entirely different type of person as a candidate for recruitment. A portrait of an ideal agent for *spetsnaz* emerges something like this: a man of between fifty-five and sixty-five years of age who has never served in the army, never had access to secret documents, does not carry or own a weapon, knows nothing about hand-to-hand fighting, does not possess any secret equipment and doesn't support the Communists, does not read the newspapers, was never in the Soviet Union and has never met any Soviet citizens, leads a lonely, introspective life, far from other people, and is by profession a forester, fisherman, lighthouse-keeper, security guard or railwayman. In many cases such an agent will be a physical invalid. *Spetsnaz* is also on the lookout for women with roughly the same characteristics.

If *spetsnaz* has such a person in its network, that means: a. that he is certainly not under any suspicion on the part of the local police or security services; b. that in the event of any enquiries being made he will be the last person to be suspected; c. that there is practically nothing by which any suspicions could be confirmed, which in turn means that in peacetime the agent is almost totally guaranteed against the danger of failure or arrest; d. that in the event of war he will remain in the same place as he was in peacetime and not be taken into the army or the public service under the wartime mobilisation.

All this gives the *spetsnaz* agent network tremendous stability and vitality. There are, of course, exceptions to every rule, and in the rules of intelligence gathering there are a lot of exceptions. You can come across many different kinds of people among the agents of *spetsnaz*, but still *spetsnaz* tries mainly to recruit people of just that type. What use are they to the organisation?

The answer is that they are formidably useful. The fact is that the acts of terrorism are carried out in the main by the professional athletes of *spetsnaz* who have been excellently trained for handling the most difficult missions. But the *spetsnaz* professionals have a lot of enemies when they get into a foreign country: helicopters and police dogs, the checking of documents at the roadside, patrols, even children playing in the street who miss very little and understand a lot. The *spetsnaz* commandos need shelter where they can rest for a few days in relative peace, where they can leave their heavy equipment and cook their own food.

So the principal task of *spetsnaz* agents is to prepare a safe hiding place in advance, long before the commandos arrive in the country. These are some examples of hiding places prepared by *spetsnaz* agents. With GRU money a pensioner who is actually a *spetsnaz* agent buys a house on the outskirts of a town, and close to a big forest. In the house he builds, quite legally, a nuclear shelter with electric light, drains, water supply and a store of food. He then buys a car of a semi-military or military type, a Land Rover for example, which is kept permanently in the garage of the house along with a good store of petrol. With that the agent's work is done. He lives quietly, makes use of his country house and car, and in addition is paid for his services. He knows that at any moment he may have 'guests' in his house. But that doesn't frighten him. In case of arrest he can say that the commando troops seized him as a hostage and made use of his house, his shelter and car.

Or, the owner of a car dump takes an old, rusty railway container and drops it among the hundreds of scrap cars and a few motorcycles. For the benefit of the few visitors to the scrapyard who come in search of spare parts, the owner opens a little shop selling Coca-Cola, hot dogs, coffee and sandwiches. He always keeps a stock of

bottled mineral water, tinned fish, meat and vegetables. The little shop also stocks comprehensive medical supplies.

Or perhaps the owner of a small firm buys a large, though old yacht. He tells his friends that he dreams of making a long journey under sail, which is why the yacht always has a lot of stores aboard. But he has no time to make the trip; what's more, the yacht is in need of repair which requires both time and money. So for the moment the old yacht lies there in a deserted bay among dozens of other abandoned yachts with peeling paint.

Large numbers of such places of refuge have been arranged. Places that can be used as shelters include caves, abandoned (or in some cases working) mines, abandoned industrial plants, city sewers, cemeteries (especially if they have family vaults), old boats, railway carriages and wagons, and so forth. Any place can be adapted as a shelter for the use of *spetsnaz* terrorists. But the place must be very well studied and prepared in advance. That is what the agents are recruited for.

This is not their only task. After the arrival of his 'guests' the agent can carry out many of their instructions: keeping an eye on what the police are doing, guarding the shelter and raising the alarm in good time, acting as a guide, obtaining additional information about interesting objects and people. Apart from all that an agent may be recruited specially to carry out acts of terrorism, in which case he may operate independently under the supervision of one person from the GRU, in a group of agents like himself, or in collaboration with the professionals of *spetsnaz* who have come from the Soviet Union.

The *spetsnaz* agent who is recruited to provide support for the operations of fighting groups in the way I have described, by acquiring a house and/or transport feels he is quite safe. The local police would have tremendous difficulty trying to run him to earth. Even if he were to be found and arrested it would be practically impossible to prove his guilt. But what the agent does not know is that danger threatens him from *spetsnaz* itself. Officers in the GRU who are discontented with the Communist regime may, either as a mark of protest or for other reasons, defect to the West. When they do, they are free to identify agents, including *spetsnaz* agents. Equally, once he has carried out his act of terrorism, the *spetsnaz* commando will destroy all traces of its work and any witnesses, including the agent who protected or helped the group in the first place. A man who is recruited as an agent to back up a commando group very rarely realises what will happen to him afterwards.

Thus if it is relatively easy to recruit a man to act as a 'sleeper', what about recruiting a foreigner to act as a real terrorist, prepared to commit murder, use explosives and fire buildings? Surely that is much more difficult?

The answer is that, surprisingly, it is not. A *spetsnaz* officer out to recruit agents for direct terrorist action has a wonderful base for his work in the West. There are a tremendous number of people who are discontented and ready to protest against absolutely anything. And while millions protest peacefully, some individuals will resort to any means to make their protest. The *spetsnaz* officer has only to find the malcontent who is ready to go to extremes.

A man who protests against the presence of American troops in Europe and sprays slogans on walls is an interesting subject. If he not only paints slogans but is also prepared to fire at an American general, should he be given the sub-machine gun or an RPG-7 grenade-launcher to do the job, he is an exceptionally interesting person. His goals tally perfectly with those of the senior officers of the GRU.

In France protesters fired an RPG-7 grenade-launcher at the reactor of a nuclear power station. Where they got the Soviet-made weapon I do not know. Perhaps it was just lying there at the roadside. But if it was a *spetsnaz* officer who had the good fortune to meet those people and provide them with their hardware, he would without further ado have been given a Red Banner medal and promotion. The senior officers of the GRU have a particular dislike of Western nuclear power stations, which reduce the West's dependence on imported oil (including Soviet oil) and make it stronger and more independent. They are one of *spetsnaz*'s most important targets.

On another occasion a group of animal rights activists in the UK injected bars of chocolate with poison. If *spetsnaz* were able to contact that group, and there is every chance it might, it would be extremely keen (without, of course, mentioning its name) to suggest to them a number of even more effective ways of protesting. Activists, radicals, peace campaigners, green party members: as far as the leaders of the GRU are concerned, these are like ripe water-melons, green on the outside, but red on the inside — and mouth-watering.

So there is a good base for recruiting. There are enough discontented people in the West who are ready not only to kill others but also to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of their own particular ideals which *spetsnaz* may exploit. The *spetsnaz* officer has only to find and take advantage of the malcontent who is ready to go to extremes.

The *spetsnaz* network of agents has much in common with international terrorism, a common centre, for example — yet they are different things and must not be confused. It would be foolhardy to claim that international terrorism came into being on orders from Moscow. But to claim that, without Moscow's support, international terrorism would never have assumed the scale it has would not be rash. Terrorism has been born in a variety of situations, in various circumstances and in different kinds of soil. Local nationalism has always been a potent source, and the Soviet Union supports it in any form, just as it offers concrete support to extremist groups operating within nationalist movements. Exceptions are made, of course, of the nationalist groups within the Soviet Union and the countries under its influence.

If groups of extremists emerge in areas where there is no sure Soviet influence, you may be sure that the Soviet Union will very shortly be their best friend. In the GRU alone there are two independent and very powerful bodies dealing with questions relating to extremists and terrorists. First, there is the 3rd Direction of the GRU which studies terrorist organisations and ways of penetrating them. Then there is the 5th Directorate which is in charge of all intelligence-gathering at lower levels, including that of *spetsnaz*.

The GRU's tactics toward terrorists are simple: never give them any orders, never tell them what to do. They are destroying Western civilisation: they know how to do it, the argument goes, so let them get on with it unfettered by petty supervision. Among them there are idealists ready to die for *their own* ideas. So let them die for them. The most important thing is to preserve their illusion that they are completely free and independent.

Moscow is an important centre of international terrorism, not because it is from Moscow that instructions are issued, but because selected terrorist groups or organisations which *ask for help* may be given it if little risk is attached to doing so. Moscow's deep involvement with terrorism is a serious political affair. One 'resistance movement' has to have more financial help, another less. One 'Red Army' must have modern weapons and an unlimited supply of ammunition, another one will do better

with old weapons and a limited supply of ammunition. One movement is to be recognised, while another will be condemned in words but supported in practice. 'Independent' terrorists give little thought to where the money comes from with which they travel the countries of the world, or who provides the Kalashnikov submachine-guns and the cartridges to go with them, or who supplies the instructors who teach them and train them.

But just look at the 'independent' Palestinians: they virtually throw their ammunition away. And if one watches a film about the fighting in Afghanistan and then one from the streets of Beirut the difference is very striking. The Afghan resistance fighters count every round, whereas the groups fighting each other in the streets of Beirut don't even bother to aim when they fire; they simply fire into the air in long bursts, although it means they are wasting someone else's money. Whose money is it?

When I was beginning my military service I was taught to count every round. Cartridges are metal and a lot of hard work. It is more difficult and more expensive to make a cartridge than to make a fountain pen. And another reason for being careful with ammunition is so that you are never without it at a critical moment. Supplying an army with ammunition is a complex logistical problem. If the transport carrying ammunition arrives even a few minutes after you have spent all your ammunition without thinking, then you are dead. But there are no such problems in Beirut. Nobody tells the conflicting groups what the ammunition costs. Nobody tells them the cost of the lives they cut off every day. Nobody mentions the danger that the regular supply of ammunition may be late. The suppliers are certain that it will not be late.

The Soviet Union condemns the civil war in the Lebanon. But there is no need for it to condemn the war. All it has to do is hold back the next transport of ammunition, and war will cease.

Apart from military and financial support, the Soviet Union also provides the terrorists aid in the form of training. Training centres have been set up in the Soviet Union for training terrorists from a number of different countries. Similar centres have been set up in the countries of Eastern Europe, in Cuba and elsewhere. I know the centre in Odessa very well. Officially it belongs to the 10th Chief Directorate of the General Staff which deals with the export of weapons, sends Soviet military advisers to foreign countries and trains foreigners to be fighters and terrorists. In the early 1960s this centre was a branch of the higher infantry officers school. An intelligence faculty was formed in it for Soviet students, many of whom ended up in the GRU and *spetsnaz*, while the remainder of the huge area, classrooms and living quarters, was given over entirely to the centre for training foreign fighters. When I was in Odessa most of the people under training were intended for work in black Africa. Not all of them came from Africa, quite a lot of them were from Cuba, but that was where the majority were destined. The difference between the training and the living conditions of the Soviet and the foreign students was tremendous.

The foreigners were better fed and wore Soviet officers' field uniforms, though without any badges of rank. They had practically no theoretical tuition at all. But their practical training was very concentrated, even by Soviet standards. For them there was no shortage of ammunition. Shooting went on in their camp day and night.

The foreigners were kept in strict isolation. The only outsiders who could see them were the Soviet students and then only through the barbed wire. The total isolation had a bad effect on some of the foreign students. But since they could not break out of it, the Cuban minister of defence stepped in and ordered some girls to be sent from

Cuba who were trained as nurses for partisan units at the Odessa centre. It was interesting to note that the soldiers were under training for one year and the officers for two years, but the nurses' training lasted ten years or more. At the end of their training the nurses were sent back to Cuba and some younger ones were sent to replace them. There were no more psychological problems at the training centre.

Foreigners belonging to 'liberation movements' who turn up in the Soviet Union are not generally recruited by the Soviet intelligence services. Experience has shown that the terrorist who considers himself independent and who kills people because of *his own* beliefs is more effective than the one who fights on the orders of other people. For his own ideas the terrorist will take risks and sacrifice his life, but he is scarcely likely to do so merely on instructions from foreigners. So why recruit him?

But there are important exceptions. Every terrorist is studied carefully during his training, and among them will be noted the potential leaders and the born rebels who will not submit to any authority. Of equal importance are the students' weaknesses and ambitions, and their relationships with one another. Some time, many years ahead, one of them may become an important leader, but not one approved by Moscow, so it is vital to know in advance who his likely friends and enemies will be.

As the students are themselves studied during training, some emerge as exceptions among the crowd and as likely material for recruitment. Recruitment at the training centres is carried on simultaneously by two different GRU organisations. The 3rd Direction recruits informers, who will subsequently remain inside the 'national liberation movements' and will pass on to the heads of the GRU the internal secrets of the movements. The 5th Directorate of the GRU recruits some of the students to be part of the *spetsnaz* network of agents. This is a fairly complicated process. Formally the candidate remains in his 'liberation movement' and works there. In fact he starts to operate on instructions from the GRU. It is a very delicate situation and all possible steps are taken to protect the reputation of the USSR in case of failure. With this aim in view the carefully selected candidate, unaware of his position, is transferred to training in one of the countries under Soviet influence. Recruitment then takes place, but not by Soviet Intelligence, rather by the Intelligence service of one of the Soviet satellite countries.

The recruitment of a full-blown terrorist is a very different matter from the recruitment of an informer-agent. The terrorist has to go through very tough training which becomes a daily, and a nightly nightmare. He dreams of the training coming to an end: he yearns for the real thing. The instructors talk to him and ask him what he would like, as a terrorist, to do. The terrorist tells them. The instructors then 'think about it' and a few days later tell him it is not possible. The torture of the training continues. Again the question of what he wants to do is raised, and again he is turned down. Various reasons are given for refusing him: we value your life too highly to send you on such a risky mission; such an act might have unwanted repercussions on your family, your comrades, and so on. Thus the range of choice is gradually narrowed down until the terrorist suggests exactly what the heads of Soviet Military intelligence want. They 'think about it' for a few days and finally give their agreement in such a way that it does not appear to be something wanted by the GRU but rather a compromise or a concession to the terrorist: if he really thinks it necessary to do it, no obstacles will be put in his way.

I have of course simplified a process which is in practice a very complicated affair.

The reward for the GRU is that a terrorist doing work for *spetsnaz* does not, in the great majority of cases, suspect he is being used. He is utterly convinced that he is

acting independently, of his own will and by his own choice. The GRU does not leave its signature or his fingerprints around.

Even in cases where it is not a question of individual terrorists but of experienced leaders of terrorist organisations, the GRU takes extraordinary steps to ensure that not only all outsiders but even the terrorist leader himself should not realise the extent of his subordination to *spetsnaz* and consequently to the GRU. The leader of the terrorists has a vast field of action and a wide choice. But there are operations and acts of terrorism on which *spetsnaz* will spend any amount of money, will provide any kind of weapon, will help in obtaining passports and will organise hiding places. But there are also terrorist acts for which *spetsnaz* has no money, no weapons, no reliable people and no hiding places. The leader of the terrorists is at complete liberty to choose the mission he wants, but without weapons, money and other forms of support his freedom to choose is suddenly severely curtailed.

Chapter 9. Weapons and Equipment

The standard issue of weapons to a *spetsnaz* is a sub-machine gun, 400 rounds of ammunition, a knife, and six hand grenades or a light single-action grenade-launcher. During a drop by parachute the sub-machine gun is carried in such a way as not to interfere with the main (or the reserve) parachute opening correctly and promptly, and not to injure the parachute on landing. But the large number of fastenings make it impossible for the parachutist to use the gun immediately after landing. So he should not be left defenceless at that moment, the parachutist also carries a P-6 silent pistol. After my escape to the West I described this pistol to Western experts and was met with a certain scepticism. Today a great deal that I told the experts has been confirmed, and examples of the silent pistol have been found in Afghanistan. (*Jane's Defence Weekly* has published some excellent photographs and a description of this unusual weapon.) For noiseless shooting over big distances PBS silencers are used and some soldiers carry them on their submachine guns.

Officers, radio-operators and cypher clerks have a smaller set of weapons: a short-barrelled sub-machine gun (AKR) of 160 rounds, a pistol and a knife.

Apart from personal weapons a *spetsnaz* group carries collective weapons in the form of RPG-16D grenade-launchers, Strela-2 ground-to-air missiles, mines for various purposes, plastic explosive, snipers' rifles and other weapons. The unit learns how to handle group weapons but does not keep them permanently with it: group weapons are held in the *spetsnaz* stores, and the quantity needed by the unit is determined before each operation. Operations can often be carried out simply with each man's personal weapons.

A group which sets out on an operation with only personal weapons can receive the group weapons it needs later, normally by parachute. And in case of pursuit a group may abandon not only the group weapons but some of their personal weapons as well. For most soldiers, to lose their weapons is an offence punished by a stretch in a penal battalion. But *spetsnaz*, which enjoys special trust and operates in quite unusual conditions, has the privilege of resolving the dilemma for itself although every case is, of course, later investigated. The commander and his deputy have to demonstrate that the situation really was critical.

Unlike the airborne and the air assault forces, *spetsnaz* does not have any heavy weapons like artillery, mortars or BMD fighting vehicles. But 'does not have' does not mean 'does not use'.

On landing in enemy territory a group may begin its operation by capturing a car or armoured troop-carrier belonging to the enemy. Any vehicle, including one with a red cross on it, is fair game for *spetsnaz*. It can be used for a variety of purposes: for getting quickly away from the drop zone, for example, or for transporting the group's mobile base, or even for mounting the assault on an especially important target. In the course of exercises on Soviet territory *spetsnaz* groups have frequently captured tanks and used them for attacking targets. An ideal situation is considered to be when the enemy uses tanks to guard especially important installations, and *spetsnaz* captures one or several of them and immediately attacks the target. In that case there is no need for a clumsy slow-moving tank to make the long trip to its target.

Many other types of enemy weapons, including mortars and artillery, can be used as heavy armament. The situation may arise in the course of a war where a *spetsnaz* group operating on its own territory will obtain the enemy's heavy weapons captured in battle, then get through to enemy territory and operate in his rear in the guise of genuine fighting units. This trick was widely used by the Red Army in the Civil War.

The Soviet high command even takes steps to acquire foreign weapons in peacetime. In April 1985 four businessmen were arrested in the USA. Their business was officially dealing in arms. Their illegal business was also dealing in arms, and they had tried to ship 500 American automatic rifles, 100,000 rounds of ammunition and 400 night-vision sights to countries of the Soviet bloc.

Why should the Soviet Union need American weapons in such quantities? To help the national liberation armies which it sponsors? For that purpose the leadership has no hesitation in providing Kalashnikov automatics, simpler and cheaper, with no problems of ammunition supply. Perhaps the 500 American rifles were for studying and copying? But the Soviet Union has captured M-16 rifles from many sources, Vietnam for one. They have already been studied down to the last detail. And there is no point in copying them since, in the opinion of the Soviet high command, the Kalashnikov meets all its requirements.

It is difficult to think of any other reason for such a deal than that they were for equipping *spetsnaz* groups. Not for all of them, of course, but for the groups of professional athletes, especially those who will be operating where the M-16 rifle is widely used and where consequently there will be plenty of ammunition for it to be found.

The quantity of rifles, sights and rounds of ammunition is easy to explain: 100 groups of five men each, in which everybody except the radio-operator has a night-sight (four to a group); for each rifle half a day's requirements (200 rounds), the rest to be taken from the enemy. American sights are used mainly because batteries and other essential spares can be obtained from the enemy.

This is clearly not the only channel through which standard American arms and ammunition are obtained. We know about the businessmen who have been arrested. There are no doubt others who have not been arrested yet.

The weapons issued to *spetsnaz* are very varied, covering a wide range, from the guitar string (used for strangling someone in an attack from behind) to small portable nuclear charges with a TNT equivalent of anything from 800 to 2000 tons.

The *spetsnaz* arsenal includes swiftly acting poisons, chemicals and bacteria. At the same time the mine remains the favourite weapon of *spetsnaz*. It is not by chance that the predecessors of the modern *spetsnaz* men bore the proud title of guards minelayers. Mines are employed at all stages of a group's operations. Immediately after a landing, mines may be laid where the parachutes are hidden and later the group will lay mines along the roads and paths by which they get away from the enemy. The mines very widely employed by *spetsnaz* in the 1960s and 1970s were the MON-50, MON-100, MON-200 and the MON-300. The MON is a directional anti-personnel mine, and the figure indicates the distance the fragments fly. They do not fly in different directions but in a close bunch in the direction the minelayer aims them. It is a terrible weapon, very effective in a variety of situations. For example, if a missile installation is discovered and it is not possible to get close to it, a MON-300 can be used to blow it up. They are at their most effective if the explosion is aimed down a street, road, forest path, ravine, gorge or valley. MON mines are often laid so that the target is covered by cross fire from two or more directions.

There are many other kinds of mines used by *spetsnaz*, each of which has been developed for a special purpose: to blow up a railway bridge, to destroy an oil storage tank (and at the same time ignite the contents), and to blow up constructions of cement, steel, wood, stone and other materials. It is a whole science and a real art. The *spetsnaz* soldier has a perfect command of it and knows how to blow up very complicated objects with the minimal use of explosive. In case of need he knows how to make explosives from material lying around. I have seen a *spetsnaz* officer make several kilograms of a sticky brown paste out of the most inoffensive and apparently non-explosive materials in about an hour. He also made the detonator himself out of the most ordinary things that a *spetsnaz* soldier carries with him — an electric torch, a razor blade which he made into a spring, a box of matches and finally the bullet from a tracer cartridge. The resulting mechanism worked perfectly. In some cases simpler and more accessible things can be used — gas and oxygen balloons of paraffin with the addition of filings of light metals. A veteran of this business, Colonel Starinov, recalls in his memoirs making a detonator out of one matchbox.

On the subject of mines, we must mention a terrible *spetsnaz* weapon known as the Strela-Blok. This weapon was used in the second half of the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s. It is quite possible that by now it has been very substantially improved. In a sense it can be described as an anti-aircraft mine, because it operates on the same principle as the mine laid at the side of a road which acts against a passing vehicle. It is related to mines which are based on portable grenade-launchers which fire at the side of a tank or an armoured personnel carrier.

The Strela-Blok is an ordinary Soviet Strela-2 portable missile (a very exact copy of the American Red Eye). A *spetsnaz* group carries one or several of these missiles with it. In the area of a major airfield the launch tube is attached to a tall tree (or the roof of a building, a tall mast, a hayrick) and camouflaged. The missile is usually installed at a short distance from the end of the runway. That done, the group leaves the area. The missile is launched automatically. A clockwork mechanism operates first, allowing the group to retire to a safe distance, then, when the set time has run out (it could be anything from an hour to several days) a very simple sound detector is switched on which reacts to the noise of an aircraft engine of a particular power. So long as the engine noise is increasing nothing happens (it means the aircraft is coming nearer), but as soon as the noise decreases the mechanism fires. The infra-red warhead reacts to the heat radiated by the engine, follows the aircraft and catches up with it.

Imagine yourself to be the officer commanding an aircraft base. One plane (perhaps with a nuclear bomb on board) is shot down by a missile as it takes off. You cancel all flights and despatch your people to find the culprits. They of course find nobody. Flights are resumed and your next plane is shot down on take-off. What will you do then? What will you do if the group has set up five Strela-Blok missiles around the base and anti-infantry mines on the approaches to them? How do you know that there are only five missiles?

Another very effective *spetsnaz* weapon is the RPO-A flamethrower. It weighs eleven kilograms and has a single action. Developed in the first half of the 1970s, it is substantially superior to any flame-throwers produced at that time in any other country. The principal difference lies in the fact that the foreign models of the time threw a stream of fire at a range of about thirty metres, and a considerable part of the fuel was burnt up in the trajectory.

The RPO-A, however, fires not a stream but a capsule, projected out of a lightweight barrel by a powder charge. The inflammable mixture flies to the target in a capsule and bursts into flame only when it strikes the target. The RPO-A has a range of more than 400 metres, and the effectiveness of one shot is equal to that of the explosion of a 122 mm howitzer shell. It can be used with special effectiveness against targets vulnerable to fire — fuel stores, ammunition dumps, and missiles and aircraft standing on the ground.

A more powerful *spetsnaz* weapon is the GRAD-V multiple rocket-launcher, a system of firing in salvos developed for the airborne forces. There the weapon can be mounted on the chassis of a GAZ-66 truck. It has 12 launching tubes which fire jet-propelled shells. But apart from the vehicle-mounted version, GRAD-V is produced in a portable version. In case of need the airborne units are issued with separate tubes and the shells to go with them. The tube is set up on the ground in the simplest of bases. It is aimed in the right direction and fired. Several separate tubes are usually aimed at one target and fired at practically the same time. Fired from a vehicle its accuracy is very considerable, but from the ground it is not so great. But in either case the effect is very considerable. The GRAD-V is largely a weapon for firing to cover a wide area and its main targets are: communications centres, missile batteries, aircraft parks and other very vulnerable targets.

The airborne forces use both versions of the GRAD-V. *Spetsnaz* uses only the second, portable version. Sometimes, to attack a very important target, for example a submarine in its berth, a major *spetsnaz* unit may fire GRAD-V shells simultaneously from several dozen or even hundreds of tubes.

In *spetsnaz* the most up-to-date weapons exist side by side with a weapon which has long been forgotten in all other armies or relegated to army museums. One such weapon is the crossbow. However amusing the reader may find this, the crossbow is in fact a terrible weapon which can put an arrow right through a man at a great distance and with great accuracy. Specialists believe that, at the time when the crossbow was competing with the musket, the musket came off best only because it

made such a deafening noise that this had a greater effect on the enemy than the soft whistle of an arrow from a crossbow. But in speed of firing, accuracy and reliability the crossbow was superior to the musket, smaller in size and weight, and killed people just as surely as the musket. Because it made no noise when fired it did not have the same effect as a simultaneous salvo from a thousand muskets.

But that noiseless action is exactly what *spetsnaz* needs today. The modern crossbow is, of course, very different in appearance and construction from the crossbows of previous centuries. It has been developed using the latest technology. It is aimed by means of optical and thermal sights of a similar quality to those used on modern snipers' rifles. The arrows are made with the benefit of the latest research in ballistics and aerodynamics. The bow itself is a very elegant affair, light, reliable and convenient. To make it easy to carry it folds up.

The crossbow is not a standard weapon in *spetsnaz*, although enormous attention is given in the athletic training units to training men to handle the weapon. In case of necessity a *spetsnaz* group may be issued with one or two crossbows to carry out some special mission in which a man has to be killed without making any noise at all and in darkness at a distance of several dozen metres. It is true that the crossbow can in no way be considered a rival to the sniper's rifle. The Dragunov sniper's rifle is a marvellous standard *spetsnaz* weapon. But if you fit a silencer to a sniper's rifle it greatly reduces its accuracy and range. For shooting accurately and noiselessly, sniper's rifles have been built with a 'heavy barrel', in which the silencer is an organic part of the weapon. This is a wonderful and a reliable weapon. Nevertheless the officers commanding the GRU consider that a *spetsnaz* commander must have a very wide collection of weapons from which he can choose for a particular situation. It is possible, indeed certain, that special situations will arise, in which the commander preparing for an operation will want to choose a rather unusual weapon.

The most frightening, demoralising opponent of the *spetsnaz* soldier has always been and always will be the dog. No electronic devices and no enemy firepower has such an effect on his morale as the appearance of dogs. The enemy's dogs always appear at the most awkward moment, when a group exhausted by a long trek is enjoying a brief uneasy sleep, when their legs are totally worn out and their ammunition is used up.

Surveys conducted among soldiers, sergeants and officers in *spetsnaz* produce the same answer again and again: the last thing they want to come up against is the enemy's dogs.

The heads of the GRU have conducted some far-reaching researches into this question and come to the conclusion that the best way to deal with dogs is to use dogs oneself. On the southeastern outskirts of Moscow there is the Central Red Star school of military dog training, equipped with enormous kennels.

The Central Military school trains specialists and rears and trains dogs for many different purposes in the Soviet Army, including *spetsnaz*. The history of using dogs in the Red Army is a rich and very varied one. In the Second World War the Red Army used 60,000 of its own dogs in the fighting. This was possible, of course, only because of the existence of the Gulag, the enormous system of concentration camps in which the rearing and training of dogs had been organised on an exceptionally high level in terms of both quantity and quality.

To the figure of 60,000 army dogs had to be added an unknown, but certainly enormous, number of transport dogs. Transport dogs were used in winter time (and throughout the year in the north) for delivering ammunition supplies to the front line,

evacuating the wounded and similar purposes. The service dogs included only those which worked, not in a pack but as individuals, carrying out different, precisely defined functions for which each one had been trained. The Red Army's dogs had respected military trades: *razvedka*; searching for wounded on the battle field; delivery of official messages. The dogs were used by the airborne troops and by the guards minelayers (now *spetsnaz*) for security purposes. But the trades in which the Red Army's dogs were used on the largest scale were mine detection and destroying tanks.

Even as early as 1941 special service units (*Spets sluzhba*) started to be formed for combating the enemy's tanks. Each unit consisted of four companies with 126 dogs in each company, making 504 dogs in each unit. Altogether during the war there were two special service regiments formed and 168 independent units, battalions, companies and platoons.

The dogs selected for the special service units were strong and healthy and possessed plenty of stamina. Their training was very simple. First, they were not fed for several days, and then they began to receive food near some tanks: the meat was given to them from the tank's lower hatch. So the dog learned to go beneath the tank to be fed. The training sessions quickly became more elaborate. The dogs were unleashed in the face of tanks approaching from quite considerable distances and taught to get under the tank, not from the front but from the rear. As soon as the dog was under the tank, it stopped and the dog was fed. Before a battle the dog would not be fed. Instead, an explosive charge of between 4 and 4.6 kg with a pin detonator was attached to it. It was then sent under the enemy tanks.

Anti-tank dogs were employed in the biggest battles, before Moscow, before Stalingrad, and at Kursk. The dogs destroyed a sufficient number of tanks for the survivors to be considered worthy of the honour of taking part in the victory parade in the Red Square.

The war experience was carefully analysed and taken into account. The dog as a faithful servant of man in war has not lost its importance, and *spetsnaz* realises that a lot better than any other branch of the Soviet Army. Dogs perform a lot of tasks in the modern *spetsnaz*. There is plenty of evidence that *spetsnaz* has used them in Afghanistan to carry out their traditional tasks — protecting groups from surprise attack, seeking out the enemy, detecting mines, and helping in the interrogation of captured Afghan resistance fighters. They are just as mobile as the men themselves, since they can be dropped by parachute in special soft containers.

In the course of a war in Europe *spetsnaz* will use dogs very extensively for carrying out the same functions, and for one other task of exceptional importance — destroying the enemy's nuclear weapons. It is a great deal easier to teach a dog to get up to a missile or an aircraft unnoticed than it is to get it to go under a roaring, thundering tank. As before, the dog would carry a charge weighing about 4 kg, but charges of that weight are today much more powerful than they were in the last war, and the detonators are incomparably more sophisticated and foolproof than they were then. Detonators have been developed for this kind of charge which detonate only on contact with metal but do not go off on accidental contact with long grass, branches or other objects. The dog is an exceptionally intelligent animal which with proper training quickly becomes capable of learning to seek out, identify correctly and attack important targets. Such targets include complicated electronic equipment, aeriels, missiles, aircraft, staff cars, cars carrying VIPs, and occasionally individuals. All of this makes the *spetsnaz* dog a frightening and dangerous enemy.

Apart from everything else, the presence of dogs with a *spetsnaz* group appreciably raises the morale of the officers and the men. Some especially powerful and vicious

dogs are trained for one purpose alone — to guard the group and to destroy the enemy's dogs if they appear.

In discussing *spetsnaz* weapons we must mention also the 'invisible weapon' — sambo. Sambo is a kind of fighting without rules which was originated in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and has since been substantially developed and improved.

The originator of sambo was B. S. Oshchepkov, an outstanding Russian sportsman. Before the Revolution he visited Japan where he learnt judo. Oshchepkov became a black belt and was a personal friend of the greatest master of this form of fighting, Jigaro Kano, and others. During the Revolution Oshchepkov returned to Russia and worked as a trainer in special Red Army units.

After the Civil War Oshchepkov was made senior instructor in the Red Army in various forms of unarmed combat. He worked out a series of ways in which a man could attack or defend himself against one or several opponents armed with a variety of weapons. The new system was based on karate and judo, but Oshchepkov moved further and further away from the traditions of the Japanese and Chinese masters and created new tricks and combinations of his own.

Oshchepkov took the view that one had to get rid of all artificial limitations and rules. In real combat nobody observes any rules, so why introduce them artificially at training sessions and so penalise the sportsmen? Oshchepkov firmly rejected all the noble rules of chivalry and permitted his pupils to employ any tricks and rules. In order that a training session should not become a bloodbath Oshchepkov instructed his pupils only to imitate some of the more violent holds although in real combat they were permitted. Oshchepkov brought his system of unarmed combat up to date. He invented ways of fighting opponents who were armed, not with Japanese bamboo sticks, but with more familiar weapons — knives, revolvers, knuckle-dusters, rifles with and without bayonets, metal bars and spades. He also perfected responses to various combat combinations — one with a long spade, the other with a short one; one with a spade, the other with a gun; one with a metal bar, the other with a piece of rope; one with an axe, three unarmed; and so forth.

As a result of its rapid development the new style of combat won the right to independent existence and its own name — sambo — which is an abbreviation of the Russian for 'self-defence without weapons' (*samooborona bez oruzhiya*). The reader should not be misled by the word 'defence'. In the Soviet Union the word 'defence' has always been understood in a rather special way. *Pravda* formulated the idea succinctly before the Second World War: 'The best form of defence is rapid attack until the enemy is completely destroyed.'¹

¹ *Pravda*, 14 August 1939.

Today sambo is one of the compulsory features in the training of every *spetsnaz* fighting man. It is one of the most popular spectator sports in the Soviet Army. It is not only in the Army, of course, that they engage in sambo, but the Soviet Army always comes out on top. Take, for example, the championship for the prize awarded by the magazine *Sovetsky Voin* in 1985. This is a very important championship in which sportsmen from many different clubs compete. But as early as the quarter finals, of the eight men left in the contest one was from the *Dinamo* club (an MVD lieutenant), one from the mysterious *Zenit* club, and the rest were from ZSKA, the Soviet Army club.

The words 'without weapons' in the name sambo should not mislead the reader. Sambo permits the use of any objects that can be used in a fight, up to revolvers and sub-machine-guns. It may be said that a hammer is not a weapon, and that is true if the hammer is in the hands of an inexperienced person. But in the hands of a master it becomes a terrible weapon. An even more frightful weapon is a spade in the hands of a skilled fighter. It was with the Soviet Army spade that we began this book. Ways of using it are one of the dramatic elements of sambo. A *spetsnaz* soldier can kill people with a spade at a distance of several metres as easily, freely and silently as with a P-6 gun.

There are two sides to sambo: sporting sambo and battle sambo. Sambo as a sport is just two men without weapons, restricted by set rules. Battle sambo is what we have described above. There is plenty of evidence that many of the holds in battle sambo are not so much secret as of limited application. Only in special teaching institutions, like the *Dinamo* Army and *Zenit* clubs, are these holds taught. They are needed only by those directly involved in actions connected with the defence and consolidation of the regime.

The *spetsnaz* naval brigades are much better equipped technically than those operating on land, for good reasons. A fleet always had and always will have much more horsepower per man than an army. A man can move over the earth simply using his muscles, but he will not get far swimming in the sea with his muscles alone. Consequently, even at the level of the ordinary fighting man there is a difference in the equipment of naval units and ground forces. An ordinary rank and file swimmer in the *spetsnaz* may be issued with a relatively small apparatus enabling him to swim under the water at a speed of up to 15 kilometres an hour for several hours at a time. Apart from such individual sets there is also apparatus for two or three men, built on the pattern of an ordinary torpedo. The swimmers sit on it as if on horseback. And in addition to this light underwater apparatus, extensive use is made of midget submarines.

The Soviet Union began intensive research into the development of midget submarines in the middle of the 1930s. As usual, the same task was presented to several groups of designers at the same time, and there was keen competition between them. In 1936 a government commission studied four submissions: the Moskito, the Blokha, and the APSS and Pigmei. All four could be transported by small freighters or naval vessels. At that time the Soviet Union had completed development work on its K-class submarines, and there was a plan that each K-class submarine should be able to carry one light aircraft or one midget submarine. At the same time experiments were also being carried out for the purpose of assessing the possibility of transporting another design of midget submarine (similar to the APSS) in a heavy bomber.

In 1939 the Soviet Union put into production the M-400 midget submarine designed by the designer of the 'Flea' prototype. The M-400 was a mixture of a submarine and a torpedo boat. It could stay for a long time under water, then surface and attack an enemy at very high speed like a fast torpedo boat. The intention was also to use it in another way, closing in on the enemy at great speed like a torpedo boat, then submerging and attacking at close quarters like an ordinary submarine.

Among the trophies of war were the Germans' own midget submarines and plans for the future, all of which were very widely used by Soviet designers. Interest in German projects has not declined. In 1976 there were reports concerning a project for a German submarine of only 90 tons displacement. Soviet military intelligence then

started a hunt for the plans of this vessel and for information about the people who had designed them.

It should never be thought that interest in foreign weapons is dictated by the Soviet Union's technical backwardness. The Soviet Union has many talented designers who have often performed genuine technical miracles. It is simply that the West always uses its own technical ideas, while Soviet engineers use their own and other people's. In the Soviet Union in recent years remarkable types of weapons have been developed, including midget submarines with crews of from one to five men. The *spetsnaz* naval brigades have several dozen midget submarines, which may not seem to be very many, but it is more than all other countries have between them. Side by side with the usual projects intensive work is being done on the creation of hybrid equipment which will combine the qualities of a submarine and an underwater tractor. The transportation of midget submarines is carried out by submarines of larger displacement, fighting ships and also ships from the fishing fleet. In the 1960s in the Caspian Sea the trials took place of a heavy glider for transporting a midget submarine. The result of the trial is not known. If such a glider has been built then in the event of war we can expect to see midget submarines appear in the most unexpected places, for example in the Persian Gulf, which is so vital to the West, even *before* the arrival of Soviet troops and the Navy. In the 1970s the Soviet Union was developing a hydroplane which, after landing on water, could be submerged several metres below water. I do not know the results of this work.

Naval *spetsnaz* can be very dangerous. Even in peacetime it is much more active than the *spetsnaz* brigades in the land forces. This is understandable, because *spetsnaz* in the land forces can operate only in the territory of the Soviet Union and its satellites and in Afghanistan, while the naval brigades have an enormous field of operations in the international waters of the world's oceans and sometimes in the territorial waters of sovereign states.

In the conduct of military operations the midget submarine can be a very unpleasant weapon for the enemy. It is capable of penetrating into places in which the ordinary ship cannot operate. The construction of several midget submarines may be cheaper than the construction of one medium-sized submarine, while the detection of several midget submarines and their destruction can be a very much more difficult task for an enemy than the hunt for the destruction of one medium-sized submarine.

The midget submarine is a sort of mobile base for divers. The submarine and the divers become a single weapons system which can be used with success against both seaborne and land targets.

The *spetsnaz* seaborne brigades can in a number of cases be an irreplaceable weapon for the Soviet high command. Firstly, they can be used for clearing the way for a whole Soviet fleet, destroying or putting out of action minefields and acoustic and other detection systems of the enemy. Secondly, they can be used against powerful shore-based enemy defences. Some countries — Sweden and Norway for example — have built excellent coastal shelters for their ships. In those shelters the ships are in no danger from many kinds of Soviet weapon, including some nuclear ones. To discover and put out of action such shelters will be one of *spetsnaz*'s most important tasks. Seaborne *spetsnaz* can also be used against bridges, docks, ports and underwater tunnels of the enemy. Even more dangerous may be *spetsnaz* operations against the most expensive and valuable ships — the aircraft carriers, cruisers, nuclear submarines, floating bases for submarines, ships carrying missiles and nuclear warheads, and against command ships.

In the course of a war many communications satellites will be destroyed and radio links will be broken off through the explosion of nuclear weapons in outer space. In that case an enormous number of messages will have to be transmitted by underground and underwater cable. These cables are a very tempting target for *spetsnaz*. *Spetsnaz* can either destroy or make use of the enemy's underwater cables, passively (i.e. listening in on them) or actively (breaking into the cable and transmitting false messages). In order to be able to do this during a war the naval brigades of *spetsnaz* are busy in peacetime seeking out underwater cables in international waters in many parts of the world.

The presence of Soviet midget submarines has been recorded in recent years in the Baltic, Black, Mediterranean, Tyrrhenian and Caribbean seas. They have been operating in the Atlantic not far from Gibraltar. It is interesting to note that for this 'scientific' work the Soviet Navy used not only the manned submarines of the Argus class but also the automatic unmanned submarines of the Zvuk class.

Unmanned submarines are the weapon of the future, although they are already in use in *spetsnaz* units today. An unmanned submarine can be of very small dimensions, because modern technology makes it possible to reduce considerably the size and weight of the necessary electronic equipment. Equally, an unmanned submarine does not need a supply of air and can have any number of bulkheads for greater stability and can raise its internal pressure to any level, so that it can operate at any depths. Finally, the loss of such a vessel does not affect people's morale, and therefore greater risks can be taken with it in peace and war. It can penetrate into places where the captain of an ordinary ship would never dare to go. Even the capture of such a submarine by an enemy does not involve such major political consequences as would the seizure of a Soviet manned submarine in the territorial waters of another state. At present, Soviet unmanned automatic submarines and other underwater equipment operate in conjunction with manned surface ships and submarines. It is quite possible that for the foreseeable future these tactics will be continued, because there has to be a man somewhere nearby. Even so, the unmanned automatic submarines make it possible substantially to increase the *spetsnaz* potential. It is perfectly easy for a Soviet ship with a crew to remain innocently in international waters while an unmanned submarine under its control is penetrating into an enemy's territorial waters.

Apart from manned and unmanned submarines *spetsnaz* has for some decades now been paying enormous attention to 'live submarines' — dolphins. The Soviet Union has an enormous scientific centre on the Black Sea for studying the behaviour of dolphins. Much of the centre's work is wrapped in the thick shroud of official secrecy.

From ancient times the dolphin has delighted man by its quite extraordinary abilities. A dolphin can easily dive to a depth of 300 metres; its hearing range is seventy times that of a human being; its brain is surprisingly well developed and similar to the human brain. Dolphins are very easy to tame and train.

The use of dolphins by *spetsnaz* could widen their operations even further, using them to accompany swimmers in action and warning them of danger; guarding units from an enemy's underwater commandos; hunting for all kinds of objects under water — enemy submarines, mines, underwater cables and pipelines; and the dolphin could be used to carry out independent acts of terrorism: attacking important targets

with an explosive charge attached to it, or destroying enemy personnel with the aid of knives, needles or more complicated weapons attached to its body.

Chapter 10. Battle Training

It was a cold, grey day, with a gusty wind blowing and ragged clouds sweeping across the sky. The deputy chief of the *spetsnaz* department, 17th Army, and I were standing near an old railway bridge. Many years previously they had built a railway line there, but for some reason it had been abandoned half-built. There remained only the bridge across leaden-coloured water. It seemed enormously high up. Around us was a vast emptiness, forest covering enormous spaces, where you were more likely to meet a bear than a man.

A *spetsnaz* competition was in progress. The lieutenant-colonel and I were umpires. The route being covered by the competitors was many tens of kilometres long. Soldiers, sodden with the rain and red in the face, laden with weapons and equipment, were trying to cover the route in the course of a few days — running, quick-marching, running again. Their faces were covered with a dirty growth of beard. They carried no food and got their water from the streams and lakes. In addition there were many unpleasant and unforeseen obstacles for them on the way.

At our control point, orange arrows told the soldiers to cross the bridge. In the middle of the bridge another arrow pointed to the handrail at the edge. A soldier lagging a long way behind his group ran onto the bridge. His tiredness kept his head down, so he ran to the middle of the bridge, and then a little further before he came to a sharp halt. He turned back and saw the arrow pointing to the edge. He looked over the rail and saw the next arrow on a marshy island, some way away and overgrown with reeds. It was huge and orange, but only just visible in the distance. The soldier let out a whistle of concern. He clambered onto the rail with all his weapons and equipment, let out a violent curse and jumped. As he dropped, he also tried to curse his fate and *spetsnaz* in good soldier's language, but the cry turned into a long drawn-out howl. He hit the black freezing water with a crash and for a long time did not reappear. Finally his head emerged from the water. It was late autumn and the water was icy cold. But the soldier set off swimming for the distant island.

At our control point, where one after the other the soldiers plunged from the high bridge, there was no means of rescuing any soldier who got into difficulty. And there was no one to rescue anybody either. We officers were there only to observe the men, to make sure each one jumped, and from the very middle of the bridge. The rest did not concern us.

‘What if one of them drowns?’ I asked the *spetsnaz* officer.

‘If he drowns it means he's no good for *spetsnaz*.’

It means he's no good for *spetsnaz*. The sentence expresses the whole philosophy of battle training. The old soldiers pass it on to the young ones who take it as a joke. But they very soon find out that nobody is joking.

Battle training programmes for *spetsnaz* are drawn up in consultation with some of the Soviet Union's leading experts in psychology. They have established that in the past training had been carried out incorrectly, on the principle of moving from the simple to the more difficult. A soldier was first taught to jump from a low level, to pack his parachute, to land properly, and so forth, with the prospect later of learning

to make a real parachute jump. But the longer the process of the initial training was drawn out, the longer the soldier was made to wait, the more he began to fear making the jump. Experience acquired in previous wars also shows that reservists, who were trained for only a few days and then thrown into battle, in the majority of cases performed very well. They were sometimes short of training, but they always had enough courage. The reverse was also shown to be true. In the First World War the best Russian regiments stayed in Saint Petersburg. They protected the Emperor and they were trained only to be used in the most critical situations. The longer the war went on, the less inclined the guards regiments became to fight. The war dragged on, turned into a senseless carve-up, and finally the possibility arose of a quick end to it. To bring the end nearer the Emperor decided to make use of his guards....

The Revolution of 1917 was no revolution. It was simply a revolt by the guards in just one city in a huge empire. The soldiers no longer wanted to fight; they were afraid of war and did not want to die for nothing. Throughout the country there were numerous parties all of which were in favour of ending the war, and only one of them called for peace. The soldiers put their trust in that party. Meanwhile, the regiments that were fighting at the front had suffered enormous losses and their morale was very low, but they had not thought of dispersing to their homes. The front collapsed only when the central authority in Saint Petersburg collapsed.

Lenin's party, which seized power in that vast empire by means of the bayonets of terrified guards in the rear, drew the correct conclusions. Today soldiers are not kept for long in the rear and they don't spend much time in training. It is judged much wiser to throw the young soldier straight into battle, to put those who remain alive into the reserve, reinforce with fresh reservists, and into battle again. The title of 'guards' is then granted only in the course of battle, and only to those units that have suffered heavy losses but kept fighting.

Having absorbed these lessons, the commanders have introduced other reforms into the methods of battle training. These new principles were tried out first of all on *spetsnaz* and gave good results.

The most important feature of the training of a young *spetsnaz* soldier is not to give him time to reflect about what is ahead for him. He should come up against danger and terror and unpleasantness unexpectedly and not have time to be scared. When he overcomes this obstacle, he will be proud of himself, of his own daring, determination and ability to take risks. And subsequently he will not be afraid.

Unpleasant surprises are always awaiting the *spetsnaz* soldier in the first stage of his service, sometimes in the most unlikely situations. He enters a classroom door and they throw a snake round his neck. He is roused in the morning and leaps out of bed to find, suddenly, an enormous grey rat in his boot. On a Saturday evening, when it seems that a hard week is behind him, he is grabbed and thrown into a small prison cell with a snarling dog. The first parachute jump is also dealt with unexpectedly. A quite short course of instruction, then into the sky and straight away out of the hatch. What if he smashes himself up? The answer, as usual: he is no good for *spetsnaz*!

Later the soldier receives his full training, both theoretical and practical, including ways to deal with a snake round his neck or a rat in his boot. But by then the soldier goes to his training classes without any fear of what is to come, because the most frightful things are already behind him.

One of the most important aspects of full battle training is the technique of survival. In the Soviet Union there are plenty of places where there are no people for thousands of square kilometres. Thus the method is to drop a small group of three or

four men by parachute in a completely unfamiliar place where there are no people, no roads and nothing except blinding snow from one horizon to the other or burning sand as far as the eye can see. The group has neither a map nor a compass. Each man has a Kalashnikov automatic, but only one round of ammunition. In addition he has a knife and a spade. The food supply is the minimum, sometimes none at all. The group does not know how long it will have to walk — a day, five days, a fortnight? The men can use their ammunition as they please. They can kill a deer, an elk or a bear. That would be plenty for the whole group for a long journey. But what if wolves were to attack and the ammunition were finished?

To make the survival exercises more realistic the groups take no radio sets with them, and they cannot transmit distress signals, whatever has happened within the group, until they meet the first people on their way. Often they begin with a parachute drop in the most unpleasant places: on thin ice, in a forest, in mountains. In 1982 three Soviet military parachutists made a jump into the crater of the Avachinsk volcano. First of all they had to get themselves out of the crater. Two other Soviet military parachutists have several times begun their exercises with a landing on the summit of Mount Elbruz (5,642 metres). Having successfully completed the survival route they have done the same thing on the highest mountains in the Soviet Union — the peaks named after Lenin (7,134 metres) and Communism (7,495 metres).

In the conditions prevailing in Western Europe today different habits and different training methods are necessary. For this part of their training *spetsnaz* soldiers are dressed in black prison jackets and dropped off at night in the centre of a big city. At the same time the local radio and television stations report that a group of especially dangerous criminals have escaped from the local prison. Interestingly, it is forbidden to publish such reports in the press in the Soviet Union but they may be put out by the local radio and television. The population thus gets only small crumbs of information, so that they are scared stiff of criminals about whom all sorts of fantastic stories start circulating.

The 'criminals' are under orders to return to their company. The local police and MVD troops are given the job of finding them. Only the senior officers of the MVD know that it is only an exercise. The middle and lower ranks of the MVD operate as if it were the real thing. The senior officers usually tell their subordinates that the 'criminals' are not armed and they are to report immediately one of them is arrested. There is a problem, though: the police often do not trust the report that the criminal is not armed (he may have stolen a gun at the last moment) and so, contrary to their instructions, they use their guns. Sometimes the arrested soldier may be delivered back to his superior officers in a half-dead state — he resisted, they say, and we simply had to defend ourselves.

In some cases major exercises are carried out, and then the whole of the police and the MVD troops know that it is just an exercise. Even so, it is a risky business to be in a *spetsnaz* group. The MVD use dogs on exercises, and the dogs do not understand the difference between an exercise and real fighting.

The *spetsnaz* soldier operates on the territory of the enemy. One of his main tasks is, as we have seen, to seek out specially important targets, for which purpose he has to capture people and extract the necessary information from them by force. That the soldier knows how to extract the information we have no doubt. But how can he understand what his prisoner is saying? *Spetsnaz* officers go through special language training and in addition every *spetsnaz* company has an officer-interpreter who speaks at least two foreign languages fluently. But there is not always an officer to hand in a

small group, so every soldier and sergeant questioning a prisoner must have some knowledge of a foreign language. But most *spetsnaz* soldiers serve for only two years and their battle training is so intense that it just is not possible to fit in even a few extra hours.

How is this problem solved? Can a *spetsnaz* soldier understand a prisoner who nods his head under torture and indicates his readiness to talk?

The ordinary *spetsnaz* soldier has a command of fifteen foreign languages and can use them freely. This is how he does it.

Imagine that you have been taken prisoner by a *spetsnaz* group. Your companion has had a hot iron on the palms of his hands and a big nail driven into his head as a demonstration. They look at you questioningly. You nod your head — you agree to talk. Every *spetsnaz* soldier has a silken phrase-book — a white silk handkerchief on which there are sixteen rows of different questions and answers. The first sentence in Russian is: 'Keep your mouth shut or I'll kill you.' The sergeant points to this sentence. Next to it is a translation into English, German, French and many other languages. You find the answer you need in your own language and nod your head. Very good. You understand each other. They can free your mouth. The next sentence is: 'If you don't tell the truth you'll be sorry!' You quickly find the equivalent in your own language. All right, all clear. Further down the silk scarf are about a hundred simple sentences, each with translations into fifteen languages — 'Where?', 'Missile', 'Headquarters', 'Airfield', 'Store', 'Police checkpoint', 'Minefield', 'How is it guarded?', 'Platoon?', 'Company?', 'Battalion?', 'Dogs?', 'Yes', 'No', and so forth. The last sentence is a repetition of the second: 'If you don't tell the truth you'll be sorry!'

It takes only a couple of minutes to teach the stupidest soldier to communicate with the aid of the silken phrase-book. In addition the soldier is taught to say and understand the simplest and most necessary words, like 'forward', 'back', 'there', 'here', 'to the right', 'to the left', 'metres', 'kilometres' and the numbers from one to twenty. If a soldier is not able to learn this no harm is done, because it is all written on the silk scarf, of which there is one for every man in the group.

In the early 1970s Soviet scientists started to develop a very light electronic device for translating in place of the silken phrase-book or to supplement it. The high command's requirements were simple: the device had to weigh not more than 400 grams, had to fit into a satchel and to be the size of a small book or even smaller. It had to have a display on which could appear a word or simple phrase in Russian which would immediately be translated into one of the most widely used languages. The person being questioned would print out his answer which would immediately be translated into Russian. I do not know whether such a device is now in use. But progress in technology will soon permit the creation of something similar. Not only *spetsnaz* but many other organisations in the Soviet Army have displayed interest in the device. However, no device can replace a real interpreter, and that is why, along with the real interpreters, so many people of different foreign nationalities are to be found in *spetsnaz*.

A Soviet soldier who escaped from Afghanistan told how he had been put into a reconnaissance company from an air-assault brigade. This is a case of not-quite-*spetsnaz*. Somebody found out that he spoke one of the local dialects and he was immediately sent to the commanding officer. The officer asked him two questions, the traditional two:

'Do you drink vodka? What about sport?'

'Vodka, yes, sport no.'

He gave completely the wrong answers. But in battle conditions a man speaking the language of the enemy is particularly valued. They take him on in spite of everything,

and take very good care of him, because on his ability to speak and understand what is said may depend the life of the group or of many groups. And on the way the groups carry out their mission may depend the lives of thousands and in some cases millions of people. The one drawback to being an interpreter is that interpreters are never forgiven for making a mistake. But the drawback is the same for him as it is for everyone else in the unit.

No soldier should be afraid of fire. Throughout the Soviet Army, in every branch of the forces, very close attention is paid to a soldier's or sailor's psychological readiness to come up against fire. In the Navy old submarines are grounded, and several sailors are shut in a compartment in which a fire is started. In the tank forces men are shut into an old tank and a fire is lit inside or outside and sometimes both at once.

The *spetsnaz* soldier comes up against fire more often than any other soldier. For that reason it is constantly present in his battle training from the first to the last day. At least once a day he sees fire that is clearly threatening his life. He is forced to jump over wide ditches with fires raging in them. He has to race through burning rooms and across burning bridges. He rides a motorcycle between flaming walls. Fire can break out next to him at any moment — when he is eating or sleeping. When he is making a parachute jump to test the accuracy of his fall a tremendous flame may flare up suddenly beneath him.

The *spetsnaz* soldier is taught to deal with fire and to protect himself and his comrades by every means — rolling along the ground to stop his clothes burning, smothering the flames with earth, branches or a groundsheet. In learning to deal with fire the most important thing is not so much for him to get to know ways of protecting himself (though this is important) as to make him realise that fire is a constant companion of life which is always at his side.

Another very important element of *spetsnaz* training is to teach a soldier not to be afraid of blood and to be able to kill. This is more important and more difficult for *spetsnaz* than for the infantry, for example. The infantry man kills his enemy mainly at a distance of more than a hundred metres and often at a distance of 300 or 400 metres or more. The infantryman does not see the expression on the face of his enemy. His job is simply to take aim correctly, hold his breath and press the trigger smoothly. The infantryman fires at plywood targets in peacetime, and in wartime at people who look at a distance very much like plywood targets. The blood which an infantryman sees is mainly the blood of his dead comrade or his own, and it gives rise to anger and a thirst for revenge. After that the infantryman fires at his enemy without feeling any twinges of conscience.

The training of a *spetsnaz* soldier is much more complicated. He often has to kill the enemy at close quarters, looking him straight in the face. He sees blood, but it is not the blood of his comrades; it is often the blood of a completely innocent man. The officers commanding *spetsnaz* have to be sure that every *spetsnaz* soldier will do his duty in a critical situation.

Like fire, blood is a constant attribute of the battle training of a soldier. It used to be thought that a soldier could be accustomed to the sight of blood gradually — first a little blood and then more day by day. But experts have thrown out this view. The *spetsnaz* soldier's first encounter with blood should be, they argue, quite unexpected and in copious quantities. In the course of his career as a fighting man there will be a whole lot of monstrous things which will spring up in front of him without any warning at all. So he should get used to being unsurprised at anything and afraid of nothing.

A group of young *spetsnaz* soldiers are hauled out of bed at night because of an emergency, and sent in pursuit of a 'spy'. The worse the weather the better. Best of all when there is torrential rain, a gusty wind, mud and slush. Many kilometres of obstacles — broken-down stairs, holes in walls, ropes across holes and ditches. The platoon of young soldiers are completely out of breath, their hearts beating fast. Their feet slip, their hands are scratched and bruised. Forward! Everyone is bad-tempered — the officers and especially the men. The soldier can give vent to his anger only by punching some weaker fellow-sufferer in the face and maybe getting a kick in the ribs in reply. The area is dotted with ruined houses, everything is smashed, ripped apart, and there's broken glass everywhere. Everything is wet and slippery, and there are never-ending obstacles with searchlights trained on them. But they don't help: they only hinder, blinding the men as they scramble over. Now they come to a dark cellar, with the doors ripped off the hinges. Everybody down. Along the corridor. Then there's water ahead. The whole group running at full tilt without slowing down rushes straight into some sticky liquid. A blinding light flashes on. It's not water they are in — it's blood. Blood up to the knees, the waist, the chest. On the walls and the ceiling are chunks of rotten flesh, piles of bleeding entrails. The steps are slippery from slimy bits of brain. Undecided, the young soldiers jam the corridor. Then somebody in the darkness lets a huge dog off its chain. There is only one way out — through the blood. Only forwards, where there is a wide passageway and a staircase upwards.

Where on earth could they get so much blood? From the slaughter-house, of course. It is not so difficult to make the tank of blood. It can be narrow and not very deep, but it must be twisting and there must be a very low ceiling over it. The building in which the tank of blood is arranged can be quite small, but piles of rotten boards, beams and concrete slabs must be tipped into it. Even in very limited space it is possible to create the impression that you are in an endless labyrinth overflowing with blood. The most important thing is to have plenty of twists and turns, holes, gaps, dead ends and doors. If you don't have enough blood you can simply use animal entrails mixed with blood. The bottom of the tank must not be even: you must give the learner the possibility of tripping over and going under. But most important is that the first training session should take place with a group of really young soldiers who have joined *spetsnaz* but are still isolated and have had no opportunity of meeting older soldiers and being warned what to expect. And there's something else: the tank of blood must not be the final obstacle that night. The greatest mistake is to drive the men through the tank and then bring the exercise to an end, leaving them to clean themselves up and go to bed. In that case the blood will only appear to them as a terrible dream. Keep driving them on over more and more obstacles.

Exhausting training exercises must be repeated and repeated again, never stopping to rest. Carry on with the exercise throughout the morning, throughout the day. Without food and without drink. In that way the men acquire the habit of not being taken aback by any surprises. Blood on their hands and on their uniforms, blood in their boots — it all becomes something familiar. On the same day there must also be a lot of gunfire, labyrinths with bones, and dogs, dogs and more dogs. The tank of blood must be remembered by the men as something quite ordinary in a whole series of painful experiences.

In the next training session there is no need to use a lot of blood, but it must be constantly present. The men have to crawl beneath some barbed wire. Why not throw some sheep's innards on to the ground and the wire? Let them crawl over that and not just along the ground. A soldier is firing from his sub-machine-gun on the firing range. Why not surround his firing position with chunks of rotting meat which is in any case no good for eating? A soldier makes a parachute jump to test the accuracy of his drop. Why not put on his landing spot, face down, a big puppet in *spetsnaz* uniform

with a torn, twisted parachute spattered with pig's blood? These are all standard tricks in *spetsnaz*, simple and effective. To increase the effect the instructors are constantly creating situations in which the men are obliged to get blood on their hands. For example, a soldier has to overcome an obstacle by scrambling up a wall. When he reaches up to grab the ridge at the top of the wall he finds it slippery and sticky from blood. He has a choice — either to drop down and break his legs (and maybe his neck) or to hang on tighter with both hands, rest his chin on the filthy sill, shift his grip, pull himself up and jump in through the window. A *spetsnaz* soldier does not fall. He pulls himself up and, with blood all over him, swearing hoarsely, he carries on his way, onwards, ever onwards.

Later in the programme come half-joking exercises such as: catch a pregnant cat, open its belly with a razor blade and count how many kittens it has. This is not such an easy exercise as might appear at first. The soldier has no gloves, the cat scratches and he has no one to help him. As an instrument he is allowed to use only a blunt, broken razor blade or razor, and he can easily cut his own fingers.

The process of familiarising *spetsnaz* men with the sight and the reality of blood is not in the least intended to make them into sadists. It is simply that blood is a liquid with which they are going to have to work in wartime. A *spetsnaz* soldier may not be scared of the red liquid. A surgeon works continually with blood and so does the butcher. What would happen if a surgeon or a butcher were suddenly to be afraid of the sight of blood?

Every Soviet soldier, wherever he may be serving, must be able to run, to shoot accurately, to keep his weapon clean and in good working order, and carry out the orders of his superiors precisely and quickly and without asking unnecessary questions. If one studies the battle training of Soviet troops one notices that there are common standards for all branches of troops operating in any conditions. This gives the impression that training in the Soviet Army is the same whatever the conditions. This is not quite true. Many of the demands placed on officers and men are standard throughout the Army. Nevertheless, each Soviet military district and each group of forces operates in conditions unique to itself. Troops of the Leningrad military district have to operate in very severe northern conditions, and their training takes place in forests, marshes and the *tundra* of an arctic climate. Troops of the Transcaucasian military district have to operate in high mountains, while those of the Carpathian and Ural military districts have to operate in medium-high mountains. Even so, the Carpathian district has a mild European climate, while that of the Ural district is wildly different: harsh, with a very hot summer and a very cold winter.

Every military district and group of forces has a commanding officer, a chief of staff and a head of Intelligence who answer with their heads for the battle-readiness of the troops under their command. But every district and group faces a specific enemy, and its own particular (though absolutely secret) task to perform in the event of war, and its own individual role in the plans of the General Staff.

One reason that training takes place *in situ* is that every Soviet frontier district and group of forces has, as a rule, the same natural conditions as the territories in which it will have to fight. Conditions in Karelia differ very little from those in Norway, Sweden and Finland. If troops from the Carpathian military district cross the frontier, they find themselves in a country of high rugged mountains identical to that in which they are permanently stationed. And, if the Soviet troops in Germany cross the frontier, even if there are small differences of terrain and climate, they are at any rate still in Germany.

Spetsnaz is concentrated at this level of fronts and armies. To make sure that *spetsnaz* training is carried out in conditions as close as possible to those in which the troops will have to operate the *spetsnaz* brigades now have special training centres. For example, the natural conditions in the Baltic military district are very similar to those in Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, northern Germany and France. The mountainous Altai is strikingly similar to Scotland. In the Carpathians there are places very similar to the French Alps. If troops have to be trained for operations in Alaska and Canada, Siberia is ideal for the purpose, while for operating in Australias *spetsnaz* units have to be trained in Kazakhstan. The *spetsnaz* brigades have their own training centres, but a brigade (or any other *spetsnaz* unit) can be ordered at any moment to operate in an unfamiliar training centre belonging to another brigade. For example, during the 'Dvina' manoeuvres *spetsnaz* units from the Leningrad, Moscow and North Caucasus military districts were transferred to Belorussia to operate there in unfamiliar conditions. The difference in conditions was especially great for the units transferred from the northern Caucasus.

These transfers are restricted mainly to troops of the internal military districts. It is reckoned that troops which are already located in Germany, Czechoslovakia and the Transcaucasian military districts will remain there in any circumstances, and it is better to train them thoroughly for operations in those conditions without wasting effort on training for every kind of condition. 'Universal' training is needed by the troops of the internal districts — the Siberian, Ural, Volga, Moscow and a few others which in the event of war will be switched to crisis points. Courses are also provided for the professional athletes. Every one of these is continually taking part in contests and travelling round the whole country from Vladivostok to Tashkent and Tbilisi to Archangelsk. Such trips in themselves play a tremendous part in training. The professional athlete becomes psychologically prepared to operate in any climate and any circumstances. Trips abroad, especially trips to those countries in which he will have to operate in the event of war, are of even greater assistance in removing psychological barriers and making the athlete ready for action in any conditions.

Spetsnaz units are often involved in manoeuvres at different levels and with different kinds of participants. Their principal 'enemies' on manoeuvres are the MVD troops, the militia, the frontier troops of the KGB, the government communications network of the KGB and the ordinary units of the armed forces.

In time of war KGB and MVD troops would be expected to operate against national liberation movements within the Soviet Union, of which the most dangerous is perceived to be the Russian movement against the USSR. (In the last war it was the Russians who created the most powerful anti-Communist army — the ROA). The Ukrainian resistance movement is also considered to be very dangerous. Partisan operations would inevitably break out in the Baltic states and the Caucasus, among others. KGB and MVD troops, which are not controlled by the Ministry of Defence, are equipped with helicopters, naval vessels, tanks, artillery and armoured personnel carriers, and exercises in which they operate against *spetsnaz* are of exceptional value to them. But the heads of the GRU are keen on joint manoeuvres for their own reasons. If *spetsnaz* has years' experience of operating against such powerful opponents as the KGB and MVD, its performance against less powerful opponents can only be enhanced.

In the course of manoeuvres the KGB and the MVD (along with the Soviet military units which have to defend themselves) use against *spetsnaz* the whole gamut of possible means of defence, from total control of radio communication to electronic

sensors, from hunter aircraft provided with the latest equipment to sniffer dogs, which are used in enormous numbers.

Apart from operating against real Soviet military targets, *spetsnaz* units go through courses at training centres where the conditions and atmosphere of the areas in which they will be expected to fight are reproduced with great fidelity. Models of Pluto, Pershing and Lance missiles and of Mirage-VI, Jaguar and other nuclear-armed aircraft are used to indicate the 'enemy'. There is also artillery capable of firing nuclear shells, special kinds of vehicles used for transporting missiles, warheads, and so forth.

The *spetsnaz* groups have to overcome many lines of defences, and any group that is caught by the defenders is subject to treatment that is rough enough to knock out of the men any desire to get caught in the future, either on manoeuvres or in a real battle. The *spetsnaz* soldier constantly has the thought drilled into him that being a prisoner is worse than death. At the same time he is taught that his aims are noble ones. First he is captured on manoeuvres and severely beaten, then he is shown archive film shot in concentration camps in the Second World War (the films are naturally more frightful than what can be perpetrated on manoeuvres), then he is released, but may be seized again and subject to a repeat performance. It is calculated that, in a fairly short time the soldier will develop a very strong negative reaction to the idea of being a prisoner, and the certainty that death — a noble death, in the cause of *spetsnaz* — is preferable.

One one occasion following my flight to the West I was present at some large-scale military manoeuvres in which the armies of many Western countries took part. The standard of battle training made a very favourable impression on me. I was particularly impressed by the skilful, I would even say masterly, way the units camouflaged themselves. The battle equipment, the tanks and other vehicles, and the armoured personnel carriers are painted with something that does not reflect the sunlight; the colour is very cleverly chosen; and the camouflaging is painted in such a way that it is difficult to make out the vehicle even at a short distance and its outline mixes in with the background. But every army made one enormous mistake with the camouflaging of some of the vehicles, which had huge white circles and red crosses painted on their sides. I explained to the Western officers that the red and white colours were very easily seen at a distance, and that it would be better to use green paint. I was told that the vehicles with the red cross were intended for transporting the wounded, which I knew perfectly well. That was a good reason, I said, why the crosses should be painted out or made very much smaller. Please be human, I said. You are transporting a wounded man and you must protect him by every means. Then protect him. Hide him. Make sure the Communists can't see him.

The argument continued and I did not win the day. Later, other Western officers tried to explain to me that I was simply ignorant of the international agreement about these things. You are not allowed to fire on a vehicle with a red cross. I agreed that I was ignorant and knew nothing about these agreements. But like me, the Soviet soldier is also unaware of those agreements. Those big red crosses are painted so that the Soviet soldier can see them and not fire on them. But the Soviet soldier only knows that a red cross means something medical. Nobody has ever told him he was not to shoot at a red cross.

I learnt about this strange rule, that red crosses must not be shot at, quite by chance. When I was still a Soviet officer, I was reading a book about Nazi war criminals and amongst the charges made was the assertion that the Nazis had sometimes fired on cars and trains bearing a red cross. I found this very interesting,

because I could not understand why such an act was considered a crime. A war was being fought and one side was trying to destroy the other. In what way did trains and cars with red crosses differ from the enemy's other vehicles?

I found the answer to the question quite independently, but not in the Soviet regulations. Perhaps there is an answer to the question there, but, having served in the Soviet Army for many years and having sat for dozens of examinations at different levels, I have never once come across any reference to the rule that a soldier may not fire at a red cross. At manoeuvres I often asked my commanding officers, some of them very high-ranking, in a very provocative way what would happen if an enemy vehicle suddenly appeared with a red cross on it. I was always answered in a tone of bewilderment. A Soviet officer of very high rank who had graduated from a couple of academies could not understand what difference it made if there were a red cross. Soviet officers have never been told its complete significance. I never bothered to put the question to any of my subordinates.

I graduated from the Military-Diplomatic Academy, and did not perform badly there. In the course of my studies I listened attentively to all the lectures and was always waiting for someone among my teachers (many of them with general's braid and many years' experience in international affairs) to say something about the red cross. But I learnt only that the International Red Cross organisation is located in Geneva, directly opposite the Permanent Representation of the USSR in United Nations agencies, and that the organisation, like any other international organisation, can be used by officers of the Soviet Intelligence services as a cover for their activities.

For whose benefit do the armies of the West paint those huge red crosses on their ambulances? Try painting a red cross on your back and chest, and going into the forest in winter. Do you think the red cross will save you from being attacked by wolves? Of course not. The wolves do not know your laws and do not understand your symbols. So why do you use a symbol the meaning of which the enemy has no idea?

In the last war the Communists did not respect international conventions and treaties, but some of their enemies, with many centuries of culture and excellent traditions, failed equally to respect international laws. Since then the Red Army has used the red cross symbol, painted very small, as a sign to tell its own soldiers where the hospital is. The red cross needs only to be visible to their own men. The Red Army has no faith in the goodwill of the enemy.

International treaties and conventions have never saved anybody from being attacked. The Ribbentrop-Molotov pact is a striking example. It did not protect the Soviet Union. But if Hitler had managed to invade the British Isles the pact would not have protected Germany either. Stalin said quite openly on this point: 'War can turn all agreements of any kind upside down.'¹

¹ *Pravda*, 15 September 1927.

The Soviet leadership and the Soviet diplomatic service adopt a philosophical attitude to all agreements. If one trusts a friend there is no need for a treaty; friends do not need to rely on treaties to call for assistance. If one is weaker than one's enemy a treaty will not be any use anyway. And if one is stronger than one's enemy, what is the point of observing a treaty? International treaties are just an instrument of politics and propaganda. The Soviet leadership and the Soviet Army put no trust in any treaties, believing only in the force that is behind the treaties.

Thus the enormous red cross on the side of a military vehicle is just a symbol of Western naivete and faith in the force of protocols, paragraphs, signatures and seals. Since Western diplomats have signed these treaties they ought to insist that the

Soviet Union, having also signed them, should explain to its soldiers, officers and generals what they contain, and should include in its official regulations special paragraphs forbidding certain acts in war. Only then would there be any sense in painting on the huge red crosses.

The red cross is only one example. One needs constantly to keep in mind what Lenin always emphasised: that a dictatorship relies on force and not on the law. 'The scientific concept of dictatorship means power, limited in no way, by no laws and restrained by absolutely no rules, and relying directly on force.'²

² Lenin, Vol. 25, p. 441.

Spetsnaz is one of the weapons of a dictatorship. Its battle training is imbued with just one idea: to destroy the enemy. It is an ambition which is not subject to any diplomatic, juridical, ethical or moral restraints.

Chapter 11. Behind Enemy Lines: *Spetsnaz* Tactics

Before *spetsnaz* units can begin active operations behind the enemy's lines they have to get there. The Soviet high command has the choice of either sending *spetsnaz* troops behind the enemy's lines before the outbreak of war, or sending them there after war has broken out. In the first case the enemy may discover them, realise that war has already begun and possibly press the buttons to start a nuclear war — pre-empting the Soviet Union. But if *spetsnaz* troops are sent in after the outbreak of war, it may be too late. The enemy may already have activated its nuclear capability, and then there will be nothing to put out of action in the enemy's rear: the missiles will be on their way to Soviet territory. One potential solution to the dilemma is that the better, smaller part of *spetsnaz* — the professional athletes — arrives before all-out war starts, taking extreme measures not to be discovered, while the standard units penetrate behind enemy lines after war has started.

In every Soviet embassy there are two secret organisations — the KGB *rezidentura* and the GRU *rezidentura*. The embassy and the KGB *rezidentura* are guarded by officers of the KGB frontier troops, but in cases where the GRU *rezidentura* has a complement of more than ten officers, it has its own internal *spetsnaz* guard. Before the outbreak of a war, in some cases several months previously, the number of *spetsnaz* officers in a Soviet embassy may be substantially increased, to the point where practically all the auxiliary personnel in the embassy, performing the duties of guards, cleaners, radio-operators, cooks and mechanics, will be *spetsnaz* athletes. With them, as their 'wives', women athletes from *spetsnaz* may turn up in the embassy. Similar changes of staff may take place in the many other Soviet bodies — the consulate, the commercial representation, the offices of Aeroflot, Intourist, TASS, Novosti and so forth.

The advantages of this arrangement are obvious, but it is not without its dangers. The principal danger lies in the fact that these new terrorist groups are based right in the centre of the country's capital city, uncomfortably close to government offices and surveillance. But within days, possibly within hours, before the outbreak of war they

can, with care, make contact with the *spetsnaz* agent network and start a real war in the very centre of the city, using hiding places already prepared.

Part of their support will come from other *spetsnaz* groups which have recently arrived in the country in the guise of tourists, teams of sportsmen and various delegations. And at the very last moment large groups of fighting men may suddenly appear out of Aeroflot planes, ships in port, trains and Soviet long-distance road transport ('Sovtransavto'). Simultaneously there may be a secret landing of *spetsnaz* troops from Soviet submarines and surface vessels, both naval and merchant. (Small fishing vessels make an excellent means of transport for *spetsnaz*. They naturally spend long periods in the coastal waters of foreign states and do not arouse suspicion, so *spetsnaz* groups can spend a long time aboard and can easily return home if they do not get an order to make a landing). At the critical moment, on receipt of a signal, they can make a landing on the coast using aqualungs and small boats. *Spetsnaz* groups arriving by Aeroflot can adopt much the same tactics. In a period of tension, a system of regular watches may be introduced. This means that among the passengers on every plane there will be a group of commandos. Having arrived at their intended airport and not having been given a signal, they can remain aboard the aircraft¹ and go back on the next flight. Next day another group will make the trip, and so on. One day the signal will come, and the group will leave the plane and start fighting right in the country's main airport. Their main task is to capture the airport for the benefit of a fresh wave of *spetsnaz* troops or airborne units (VDV).

¹ An aircraft is considered to be part of the territory of the country to which it belongs, and the pilot's cabin and the interior of the plane are not subject to foreign supervision.

It is a well-known fact that the 'liberation' of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 began with the arrival at Prague airport of Soviet military transport planes with VDV troops on board. The airborne troops did not need parachutes; the planes simply landed at the airport. Before the troops disembarked there was a moment when both the aircraft and their passengers were completely defenceless. Was the Soviet high command not taking a risk? No, because the fact is that by the time the planes landed, Prague airport had already been largely paralysed by a group of 'tourists' who had arrived earlier.

Spetsnaz groups may turn up in the territory of an enemy from the territory of neutral states. Before the outbreak of war or during a war *spetsnaz* groups may penetrate secretly into the territory of neutral states and wait there for an agreed signal or until a previously agreed time. One of the advantages of this is that the enemy does not watch over his frontiers with neutral countries as carefully as he does over his frontiers with Communist countries. The arrival of a *spetsnaz* group from a neutral state may pass unnoticed both by the enemy and the neutral state.

But what happens if the group is discovered on neutral territory? The answer is simple: the group will go into action in the same way as in enemy territory — avoid being followed, kill any witnesses, use force and cunning to halt any pursuers. They will make every effort to ensure that nobody from the group gets into the hands of their pursuers and not to leave any evidence about to show that the group belongs to the armed forces of the USSR. If the group should be captured by the authorities of the neutral state, Soviet diplomacy has enormous experience and some well-tried counter-moves. It may admit its mistake, make an official apology and offer compensation for any damage caused; it may declare that the group lost its way and thought it was already in enemy territory; or it may accuse the neutral state of having

deliberately seized a group of members of the Soviet armed forces on Soviet territory for provocative purposes, and demand explanations, apologies and compensation, accompanied by open threats.

Experience has shown that this last plan is the most reliable. The reader should not dismiss it lightly. Soviet official publications wrote at the beginning of December 1939 that war was being waged against Finland in order to establish a Communist regime there, and a Communist government of 'people's Finland' had already been formed. Thirty years later Soviet marshals were writing that it was not at all like that: the Soviet Union was simply acting in self-defence. The war against Finland, which was waged from the first to the last day on Finnish territory, is now described as 'repelling Finnish aggression'² and even as 'fulfilling the plan for protecting our frontiers.'³

² Marshal K. A. Meretskov, *Na Sluzhbe narodu (In the Service of the People)*, 1968.

³ Marshal A. M. Vasilevsky, *Delo Vsei gesnie (A Life's Work)*, 1968.

The Soviet Union is always innocent: it only repels perfidious aggressors. On other people's territory.

The principal way of delivering the main body of *spetsnaz* to the enemy's rear after the outbreak of war is to drop them by parachute. In the course of his two years' service every *spetsnaz* soldier makes thirty-five to forty parachute jumps. *Spetsnaz* professionals and officers have much greater experience with parachutes; some have thousands of jumps to their credit.

The parachute is not just a weapon and a form of transport. It also acts as a filter which courageous soldiers will pass through, but weak and cowardly men will not. The Soviet Government spends enormous sums on the development of parachute jumping as a sport. This is the main base from which the airborne troops and *spetsnaz* are built up. On 1 January 1985 the FAI had recorded sixty-three world records in parachute jumping, of which forty-eight are held by Soviet sportsmen (which means the Soviet Army). The Soviet military athlete Yuri Baranov was the first man in the world to exceed 13,000 jumps. Among Soviet women the champion in the number of jumps is Aleksandra Shvachko — she has made 8,200 jumps. The parachute psychosis continues.

In peacetime military transport planes are used for making parachute drops. But this is done largely to prevent the fact of the existence of *spetsnaz* from spreading. In wartime military transports would be used for dropping *spetsnaz* groups only in exceptional circumstances. There are two reasons for this. In the first place, the whole fleet of military transport planes would be taken up with transporting the airborne forces (VDV), of which there are an enormous number. Apart from which, military aviation would have other difficult missions to perform, such as the transport of troops within the country from passive, less important sectors to the areas where the main fighting was taking place. Secondly, the majority of military transports are enormous aircraft, built for moving people and equipment on a large scale, which do not suit the purposes of *spetsnaz*. It needs small planes that do not present large targets and

carry no more than twenty or thirty people. They must also be able to fly at very low level without much noise. In some cases even smaller aircraft that take eight to ten, or down to three or four parachutists, are needed.

However, the official term 'civil aviation', which is the source of most *spetsnaz* transport in wartime, is a substantial misnomer. The minister for civil aviation bears, quite officially, the rank of air chief marshal in the Air Force. His deputies bear the rank of generals. The whole of Aeroflot's flying personnel have the ranks of officers of the reserve. In the event of war Aeroflot simply merges with the Soviet Air Force, and the reserve officers then become regular officers with the same rank.

It has more than enough small aircraft for the business of transporting and supplying *spetsnaz* units. The best of them are the Yakovlev-42 and the Yakovlev-40, very manoeuvrable, reliable, low-noise planes capable of flying at very low altitudes. They have one very important construction feature — passengers embark and disembark through a hatch at the bottom and rear of the aircraft. If need be, the hatch cover can be removed altogether, giving the parachutists an exit as on a military transport plane, which makes it possible to drop them in complete safety. Another plane that has great possibilities for *spetsnaz* is the Antonov-72 — an exact copy of the American YC-14 of which the plans were stolen by GRU spies.

But how can *spetsnaz* parachutists use ordinary civil jet-propelled aircraft, which passengers enter and leave by side doors? The doors cannot be opened in flight. And if they were made to open inwards instead of outwards, it would be exceptionally dangerous for a parachutist to leave the plane, because the force of the current of air would press the man back against the body of the plane. He might be killed either from the force with which he bounced back against the plane, or through interference with the opening of his parachute.

The problem has been solved by a very simple device. The door is arranged to open inwards, and a wide tube made of strong, flexible, synthetic material is allowed to hang out. As he leaves the door the parachutist finds himself in a sort of three-metre long corridor which he slides down so that he comes away from the aircraft when he is slightly to one side and below the fuselage.

Variations on this device were first used on Ilyushin-76 military transport planes. The heavy equipment of the airborne troops was dropped out of the huge rear freight hatch, while at the same time the men were leaving the plane through flexible 'sleeves' at the side. The West has not given this simple but very clever invention its due. Its importance lies not only in the fact that the time taken to drop Soviet parachutists from transport planes has been substantially reduced, with the result that every drop is safer and that forces are much better concentrated on landing. What it also means is that practically *any* jet-propelled civil aircraft can now be used for dropping parachute troops.

The dropping of a *spetsnaz* unit can be carried out at any time of the day or night. Every time has its advantages and its problems. Night-time is the *spetsnaz*soldier's ally, when the appearance of a group of *spetsnaz* deep in the enemy's rear may not be noticed at all. Even if the enemy were aware of the group's arrival, it is never easy to organise a full-scale search at night, especially if the exact landing place is not known and may be somewhere inaccessible where there are forests and hills or mountains with few roads and no troops on the spot. But at night there are likely to be casualties among the parachutists as they land. The same problems of assembly and orientation which face the pursuit troops face the *spetsnaz* unit too.

During the day, obviously, there are fewer accidents on landing; but the landing will be seen. Deliberate daytime landings may sometimes be carried out for the simple reason that the enemy does not expect such brazen behaviour at such a time.

In many cases the drop will be carried out early in the morning while there are still stars in the sky and the sun has not risen. This is a very good time if large numbers of soldiers are being dropped who are expected to go straight into battle and carry out their mission by means of a really sudden attack. In that case the high command does its best to ensure that the groups have as much daylight as possible for active operations on the first, most important day of their mission.

But every *spetsnaz* soldier's favourite time for being dropped is at sunset. The flight is calculated so that the parachutists' drop is carried out in the last minutes before the onset of darkness. The landing then takes place in the twilight when it is still light enough to avoid landing on a church spire or a telegraph pole. In half an hour at the most darkness will conceal the men and they will have the whole night ahead of them to leave the landing area and cover their tracks.

On its own territory *spetsnaz* has a standard military structure⁴: section, platoon, company, battalion, brigade; or section, platoon, company, regiment. This organisation simplifies the control, administration and battle training of *spetsnaz*. But this structure cannot be used on enemy territory.

⁴ See Appendices for precise organisation of *spetsnaz* at different levels.

The problem is, firstly, that every *spetsnaz* operation is individual and unlike any other; a plan is worked out for each operation, which is unlike any other. Each operation consequently requires forces organised, not in a standard fashion, but adapted to the particular plan.

Secondly, when it is on enemy territory, a *spetsnaz* unit is in direct communication with a major headquarters, at the very least the headquarters of an all-arm or tank army, and orders are received in many cases directly from a high-level HQ. A very long chain of command is simply not needed.

On operations a simple and flexible chain of command is used. The organisational unit on enemy territory is known officially as the reconnaissance group of *spetsnaz* (RGSN). A group is formed before the beginning of an operation and may contain from two to thirty men. It can operate independently or as part of a detachment (ROSN), which consists of between thirty and 300 or more men. The detachment contains groups of various sizes and for various purposes. The names 'detachment' and 'group' are used deliberately, to emphasise the temporary nature of the units. In the course of an operation groups can leave a detachment and join it again, and each group may in turn break up into several smaller groups or, conversely, come together with others into one big group. Several large groups can join up and form a detachment which can at any moment split up again. The whole process is usually planned before the operation begins. For example: the drop may take place in small groups, perhaps fifteen of them altogether. On the second day of the operation (D+1) eight of the groups will join up into one detachment for a joint raid, while the rest operate independently. On D+2 two groups are taken out of the detachment to form the basis of a new detachment and another six groups link up with the second detachment. On D+5 the first detachment splits up into groups and on D+6 the second group splits up, and so on. Before the beginning of the operation

each group is informed where and when to meet up with the other groups and what to do in case the rendezvous is not kept.

Having landed in enemy territory *spetsnaz* may go straight into battle. Otherwise, it will hide the equipment it no longer needs — boats, parachutes, etc — by either burying them in the ground or sinking them in water. Very often it will then mine the drop area. The mines are laid where the unwanted equipment has been buried. The area is also treated with one of a number of substances which will confuse a dog's sense of smell. After that, the group (of whatever size) will break up into little sub-groups which depart quickly in different directions. A meeting of the sub-groups will take place later at a previously arranged spot or, if this proves problematic, at one of the several alternative places which have been agreed.

The drop area is usually the first place where casualties occur. However good the parachute training is, leg injuries and fractures are a frequent occurrence, and when the drop takes place in an unfamiliar place, in complete darkness, perhaps in fog, over a forest or mountains, they are inevitable. Even built-up areas provide their own hazards. *Spetsnaz* laws are simple and easy to understand. In a case of serious injury the commander cannot take the wounded man with him; doing so would greatly reduce the group's mobility and might lead to the mission having to be aborted. But the commander cannot, equally, leave the wounded man alone. Consequently a simple and logical decision is taken, to kill the wounded man. *Spetsnaz* has a very humane means of killing its wounded soldiers — a powerful drug known to the men as 'Blessed Death'. An injection with the drug stops the pain and quickly produces a state of blissful drowsiness. In the event that a commander decides, out of misguided humanity, to take the wounded man with him, and it looks as if this might jeopardise the mission, the deputy commander is under orders to dispatch both the wounded man and the commander. The commander is removed without recourse to drugs. It is recommended that he be seized from behind with a hand over his mouth and a knife blow to his throat. If the deputy does not deal with his commander in this situation, then not just the commander and his deputy, but the entire group may be regarded as traitors, with all the inevitable consequences.

As they leave the area of the drop the groups and sub-groups cover their tracks, using methods that have been well known for centuries: walking through water and over stones, walking in each other's footsteps, and so forth. The groups lay more mines behind them and spread more powder against dogs.

After leaving the drop zone and having made sure that they are not being followed, the commander gives orders for the organisation of a base and a reserve base, safe places concealed from the view of outsiders. Long before a war GRU officers, working abroad in the guise of diplomats, journalists, consuls and other representatives of the USSR, choose places suitable for establishing bases. The majority of GRU officers have been at some time very closely familiar with *spetsnaz*, or are themselves *spetsnaz* officers, or have worked in the Intelligence Directorate of a district or group of forces. They know what is needed for a base to be convenient and safe.

Bases can be of all sorts and kinds. The ideal base would be a hiding place beneath ground level, with a drainage system, running water, a supply of food, a radio set to pick up the local news and some simple means of transport. I have already described how *spetsnaz* agents, recruited locally, can establish the more elaborate bases which are used by the professional groups of athletes carrying out exceptionally important tasks. In the majority of cases the base will be somewhere like a cave, or an

abandoned quarry, or an underground passage in a town, or just a secluded place among the undergrowth in a dense forest.

A *spetsnaz* group can leave at the base all the heavy equipment it does not need immediately. The existence of even the most rudimentary base enables it to operate without having to carry much with it in the way of equipment or supplies. The approaches to the base are always guarded and the access paths mined — the closest with ordinary mines and the more distant ones with warning mines which explode with much noise and a bright flash, alerting any people in the base of approaching danger.

When the group moves off to carry out its task, a few men normally remain behind to guard the base, choosing convenient observation points from which to keep an eye on it. In the event of its being discovered the guard leaves the location quietly and makes for the reserve base, leaving warnings of the danger to the rest of the group in an agreed place. The main group returning from its mission will visit the reserve base first and only then go to the main base. There is a double safeguard here: the group may meet the guards in the reserve base and so avoid falling into a trap; otherwise the group will see the warning signals left by the guards. The craters from exploded mines around the base may also serve as warnings of danger. If the worst comes to the worst, the guards can give warning of danger by radio.

A *spetsnaz* group may also have a moving base. Then it can operate at night, unhampered by heavy burdens, while the guards cart all the group's heavy equipment along by other routes. Each morning the group meets up with its mobile base. The group replenishes its supplies and then remains behind to rest or to set off on another operation, while the base moves to another place. The most unexpected places can be used by the mobile bases. I once saw a base which looked simply like a pile of grass that had been thrown down in the middle of a field. The soldiers' packs and equipment had been very carefully disguised, and the men guarding the base were a kilometre away, also in a field and camouflaged with grass. All around there were lots of convenient ravines overgrown with young trees and bushes. That was where the KGB and MVD units were looking for the *spetsnaz* base, and where the helicopters were circling overhead. It did not occur to anybody that a base could be right in the middle of an open field.

In some cases a *spetsnaz* group may capture a vehicle for transporting its mobile base. It might be an armoured personnel carrier, a truck or an ordinary car. And if a group is engaged in very intensive fighting involving frequent changes of location, then no base is organised. In the event of its being pursued the group can abandon all its heavy equipment, having first removed the safety pin from the remaining mines.

In order to destroy a target it has first to be located. In the overwhelming majority of cases a *spetsnaz* operation includes the search for the target. This is understandable, since targets whose location is known and which are not movable can be destroyed easily and quickly with missiles and aircraft. But a great number of targets in present-day fighting are mobile. On the eve of a war or just after it has broken out, government offices are moved out of a country's capital for secret command posts whose location is known to very few people. New communications centres and lines are brought into operation. Aircraft are removed from stationary aerodromes and dispersed to airfields established in places unknown to the enemy. Many missile installations are moved to new concealed, and carefully guarded, locations. Troops and headquarters are also relocated.

In these circumstances the search for targets acquires paramount significance for *spetsnaz*. To be able to find a target of special importance, to identify it, and to

know how to distinguish real targets from false ones, become the most important tasks for *spetsnaz*, more important even than the destruction of the targets. Once a target has been discovered it can be destroyed by other forces — missiles, aircraft, marines, airborne troops. But a target that has not been discovered cannot be destroyed by anyone.

Because the business of identifying targets is the most important task for *spetsnaz* it cannot be a separate and independent organisation. It can carry out this task only if it relies on all the resources of the GRU, and only if it can make use of information obtained by agents and from all the various kinds of *razvedka* — satellite, aircraft, naval, electronic, and so forth.

Every form of *razvedka* has its good and its bad side. A complete picture of what is happening can be obtained only by making use of all forms of *razvedka* in close interaction one with another, compensating for the weaknesses of some forms with the advantages of the others.

Every officer in charge of *razvedka* uses *spetsnaz* only where its use can give the very best result. When he sends a *spetsnaz* group behind enemy lines the officer in command already knows a good deal about the enemy from other sources. He knows exactly what the unit is to look for and roughly where it has to look. The information obtained by *spetsnaz* groups (sometimes only fragmentary and uncertain) can in turn be of exceptional value to the other forms of *razvedka* and be the starting point for more attentive work in those areas by agents and other services.

Only with a union of all forces and resources is it possible to reveal the plans and intentions of the enemy, the strength and organisation of his forces, and to inflict defeat on him.

But let us return to the commander of the *spetsnaz* group who, despatching it to a particular area, already knows a good deal about the area, the specially important targets that may be found there, and even their approximate location. This information (or as much of it as concerns him) is passed on to the commander of the group and his deputy. The group has landed safely, covered its tracks, established a base and started its search. How should it set about it?

There are several tried and tested methods. Each target of special importance must have a communications centre and lines of communication leading to it. The group may include experts at radio *razvedka*. Let us not forget that *spetsnaz* is the 3rd department and radio *razvedka* the 5th department of the same Directorate (the Second) at the headquarters of every front, fleet, group of forces and military district. *Spetsnaz* and radio *razvedka* are very closely connected and often help each other, even to the point of having radio *razvedka* experts in *spetsnaz* groups. By monitoring radio transmissions in the area of important targets it is possible to determine quite accurately their whereabouts.

But it is also possible to discover the target without the aid of radio *razvedka*. The direction of receiving and transmitting aerials of tropospheric, radio-relay and other communication lines provides a lot of information about the location of the terminal points on lines of communication. This in turn leads us right up to the command posts and other targets of great importance.

Sometimes before a search begins the commander of the group will decide by the map which, in his opinion, are the most likely locations for particular targets. His group will examine those areas first of all.

If the targets are moved, then the roads, bridges, tunnels and mountain passes where they may be seen are put under observation.

The search for a particular target can be carried out simultaneously by several groups. In that case the officer in charge divides the territory being searched into squares in each of which one group operates.

Each group searching a square usually spreads out into a long line with tens or even hundreds of metres between each man. Each man moves by the compass, trying to keep in sight of his neighbours. They advance in complete silence. They choose suitable observation points and carefully examine the areas ahead of them, and if they discover nothing they move on to another hiding place. In this way relatively small groups of well trained soldiers can keep quite extensive areas under observation. Unlike *razvedka* conducted from outer space or the air, *spetsnaz* can get right up to targets and view them, not from above, but from the ground. Experience shows that it is much more difficult to deceive a *spetsnaz* man with false targets than it is a man operating an electronic intelligence station or an expert at interpreting pictures taken from the air or from space.

Spetsnaz groups have recently begun to make ever greater use of electronic apparatus for seeking their targets. They now carry portable radar, infra-red and acoustic equipment, night-vision sights, and so forth. But whatever new electronic devices are invented, they will never replace the simplest and most reliable method of establishing the location of important targets: questioning a prisoner.

It may be claimed that not every prisoner will agree to answer the questions put to him, or that some prisoners will answer the questions put by *spetsnaz* but give wrong answers and lead their interrogators astray. To which my reply is categorical. Everybody answers questions from *spetsnaz*. There are no exceptions. I have been asked how long a very strong person can hold out against questioning by *spetsnaz*, without replying to questions. The answer is: one second. If you don't believe this, just try the following experiment. Get one of your friends who considers himself a strong character to write on a piece of paper a number known only to himself and seal the paper in an envelope. Then tie your friend to a post or a tree and ask him what number he wrote on the paper. If he refuses to answer, file his teeth down with a big file and count the time. Having received the answer, open the envelope and check that he has given you the number written on the paper. I guarantee the answer will be correct.

If you perform such an experiment, you will have an idea of one of *spetsnaz*'s milder ways of questioning people. But there are more effective and reliable ways of making a person talk. Everyone who falls into the hands of *spetsnaz* knows he is going to be killed. But people exert themselves to give correct and precise answers. They are not fighting for their lives but for an easy death. Prisoners are generally interrogated in twos or larger groups. If one seems to know less than the others, he can be used for demonstration purposes to encourage them to talk. If the questioning is being done in a town the prisoner may have a heated iron placed on his body, or have his ears pierced with an electric drill, or be cut to pieces with an electric saw. A man's fingers are particularly sensitive. If the finger of a man being questioned is simply bent back and the end of the finger squashed as it is bent, the pain is unendurable. One method considered very effective is a form of torture known as 'the bicycle'. A man is bound and laid on his back. Pieces of paper (or cotton wool or rags) soaked in spirit, eau-de-cologne, etc., are stuck between his fingers and set alight.

Spetsnaz has a special passion for the sexual organs. If the conditions permit, a very old and simple method is used to demonstrate the power of *spetsnaz*. The captors drive a big wedge into the trunk of a tree, then force the victim's sexual organs into the opening and knock out the wedge. They then proceed to question the other prisoners. At the same time, in order to make them more talkative, the principal *spetsnaz* weapon — the little infantryman's spade — is used. As *spetsnaz* asks its questions the blade of the spade is used to cut off ears and fingers, to hit the victims in the liver and perform a whole catalogue of unpleasant operations on the person under interrogation.

One very simple way of making a man talk is known as the 'swallow', well known in Soviet concentration camps. It does not require any weapons or other instruments, and if it is used with discretion it does not leave any traces on the victim's body. He is laid face down on the ground and his legs are bent back to bring his heels as close as possible to the back of his neck. The 'swallow' generally produces a straight answer in a matter of seconds.

Of course, every method has its shortcomings. That is why a commander uses several methods at the same time. The 'swallow' is not usually employed in the early stages of an operation. Immediately after a landing, the commander of a *spetsnaz* group tries to use one really blood-thirsty device out of his arsenal: cutting a man's lips with a razor, or breaking his neck by twisting his head round. These methods are used even when a prisoner obviously has no information, the aim being to prevent any possibility of any of the men in the group going over to the enemy. Everyone, including those who have not taken part in the torture, knows that after this he has no choice: he is bound to his group by a bloody understanding and must either come out on top or die with his group. In case of surrender he may have to suffer the same torture as his friends have just used.

In recent years the KGB, GRU and *spetsnaz* have had the benefit of an enormous training ground in which to try out the effectiveness of their methods of questioning: Afghanistan. The information received from there describes things which greatly exceed in skill and inventiveness anything I have described here. I am quite deliberately not quoting here interrogation methods used by the Soviet forces, including *spetsnaz*, in Afghanistan, which have been reported by thoroughly reliable sources. Western journalists have access to that material and to living witnesses.

Once it has obtained the information it needs about the targets of interest to it, the *spetsnaz* group checks the facts and then kills the prisoners. It should be particularly noted that those who have told the truth do have an easy death. They may be shot, hanged, have their throats cut or be drowned. *Spetsnaz* does not torture anybody for the sake of torture. You come across practically no sadists in *spetsnaz*. If they find one they quickly get rid of him. Both the easier and the tougher forms of questioning in *spetsnaz* are an unavoidable evil that the fighting men have to accept. They use these methods, not out of a love of torturing people, but as the simplest and most reliable way of obtaining information essential to their purpose.

Having discovered the target and reported on it to their command, *spetsnaz* will in most cases leave the target area as quickly as possible. Very soon afterwards, the target will come under attack by missiles, aircraft or other weapons. In a number of cases, however, the *spetsnaz* group will destroy the target it has discovered itself. They are often given the mission in that form: 'Find and destroy'. But there are also situations when the task is given as 'Find and report', and the group commander takes an independent decision about destroying the target. He may do so when, having found the target, he discovers suddenly that he cannot report to his superior officers about it; and he may also do so when he comes across a missile ready for firing.

Robbed of the chance or the time to transmit a report, the commander has to take all possible steps to destroy the target, including ordering a suicide attack on it. Readiness to carry out a suicide mission is maintained in *spetsnaz* by many methods. One of them is to expose obvious sadists and have them transferred immediately to other branches of the forces, because experience shows that in the overwhelming majority of cases the sadist is a coward, incapable of sacrificing himself.

The actual destruction of targets is perhaps the most ordinary and prosaic part of the entire operation. VIPs are usually killed as they are being transported from one place to another, when they are at their most vulnerable. The weapons include snipers' rifles, grenade-launchers or mines laid in the roadway. If a VIP enjoys travelling by helicopter it is a very simple matter. For one thing, a single helicopter is a better target than a number of cars, when the terrorists do not know exactly which car their victim is travelling in. Secondly, even minor damage to a helicopter will bring it down and almost certainly kill the VIP.

Missiles and aircraft are also attacked with snipers' rifles and grenade-launchers of various kinds. One bullet hole in a missile or an aircraft can put it out of action. If he cannot hit his target from a distance the commander of the group will attack, usually from two sides. His deputy will attack with one group of men from one side, trying to make as much noise and gunfire as possible, while the other group led by the commander will move, noiselessly, as close to the target as it can. It is obvious that an attack by a small *spetsnaz* group on a well defended target is suicide. But *spetsnaz* will do it. The fact is that even an unsuccessful attack on a missile ready for firing will force the enemy to re-check the whole missile and all its supporting equipment for faults. This may delay the firing for valuable hours, which in a nuclear war might be long enough to alter the course of the conflict.

Chapter 12. Control and Combined Operations

If we describe the modern infantryman in battle and leave it at that, then, however accurate the description, the picture will be incomplete. The modern infantryman should never just be described independently, because he never operates independently. He operates in the closest co-operation with tanks; his way forward is laid by sappers; the artillery and air force work in his interests; he may be helped in his fighting by helicopter gunships; ahead of him there are reconnaissance and parachute units; and behind him is an enormous organisation to support and service him, from supplying ammunition to evacuating the wounded quickly.

To understand the strength of *spetsnaz* one has to remember that *spetsnaz* is primarily reconnaissance, forces which gather and transmit information to their commanders to which their commanders immediately react. The strength of those reconnaissance forces lies in the fact that they have behind them the whole of the nuclear might of the USSR. It may be that before the appearance of *spetsnaz* on enemy territory, a nuclear blow will already have been made, and despite the attendant dangers, this greatly improves the position of the fighting groups, because the enemy is clearly not going to bother with them. In other circumstances the groups will appear on enemy territory and obtain information required by the Soviet command or amplify it, enabling an immediate nuclear strike to follow. A nuclear strike close to where a *spetsnaz* group is operating is theoretically regarded as the salvation of the group. When there are ruins and fires all round, a state of panic and the usual links and standards have broken down, a group can operate almost openly without any fear of capture.

Similarly, Soviet command may choose to deploy other weapons before *spetsnaz* begins operations or immediately after a group makes its landing: chemical weapons, air attacks or bombardment of the coastline with naval artillery. There is a co-operative principle at work here. Such actions will give the *spetsnaz* groups enormous moral and physical support. And the reverse is also true — the operations of a group in a particular area and the information it provides will make the strike by Soviet forces more accurate and effective.

In the course of a war direct co-operation is the most dependable form of co-operation. For example, the military commander of a front has learnt through his network of agents (the second department of the 2nd Directorate at front headquarters) or from other sources that there is in a certain area a very important but mobile target which keeps changing its position. He appoints one of his air force divisions to destroy the target. A *spetsnaz* group (or groups) is appointed to direct the division to the target. The liaison between the groups and the air force division is better not conducted through the front headquarters, but directly. The air division commander is told very briefly what the groups are capable of, and they are then handed over to his command. They are dropped behind enemy lines and, while they are carrying out the operation, they maintain direct contact with their divisional headquarters. After the strike on the target the *spetsnaz* group — if it has survived — returns immediately to the direct control of the front headquarters, to remain there until it needs to be put under the command of some other force as decided by the front commander.

Direct co-operation is a cornerstone of Soviet strategy and practised widely on manoeuvres, especially at the strategic level¹, when *spetsnaz* groups from regiments of professional athletes are subordinated to commanders of, for example, the strategic missile troops or the strategic (long-range) aviation.

¹ See Appendix D for the organisation of *spetsnaz* at strategic level.

For the main principle governing Soviet strategy is the concentration of colossal forces against the enemy's most vulnerable spot. Soviet troops will strike a super-powerful, sudden blow and then force their way rapidly ahead. In this situation, or immediately before it, a mass drop of *spetsnaz* units will be carried out ahead of and on the flanks of the advancing force, or in places that have to be neutralised for the success of the operation on the main line of advance.

Spetsnaz units at army level², on the other hand, are dropped in the areas of operations of their own armies at a depth of 100 to 500 kilometres; and *spetsnaz* units under the command of the fronts³ are dropped in the area of operations of their fronts at a depth of between 500 and 1000 kilometres.

² See Appendix A.

³ See Appendix B.

The headquarters to which the group is subordinated tries not to interfere in the operations of the *spetsnaz* group, reckoning that the commander on the spot can see and understand the situation better than can people at headquarters far from where the events are taking place. The headquarters will intervene if it becomes necessary to redirect it to attack a more important target or if a strike is to take place where it is located. But a warning may not be given if the group is not going to have time to get away from the strike area, since all such warnings carry the risk of revealing Soviet intentions to the enemy.

Co-operation between different groups of *spetsnaz* is carried out by means of a distribution of territories for operations by different groups, so that simultaneous blows can be struck in different areas if need be. Co-operation can also be carried out by forward headquarters at battalion, regiment and brigade level, dropped behind the lines to co-ordinate major *spetsnaz* forces in an area. Because *spetsnaz* organisation is so flexible, a group which has landed by chance in another group's operational area can quickly be brought under the latter's command by an order from a superior headquarters.

In the course of a war other Soviet units apart from *spetsnaz* will be operating in enemy territory:

Deep reconnaissance companies from the reconnaissance battalions of the motor-rifle and tank divisions. Both in their function and the tactics they adopt, these companies are practically indistinguishable from regular *spetsnaz*. The difference lies in the fact that these companies do not use parachutes but penetrate behind the enemy's lines in helicopters, jeeps and armoured reconnaissance vehicles. Deep reconnaissance units do not usually co-operate with *spetsnaz*. But their operations, up to 100 kilometres behind the front line, make it possible to concentrate *spetsnaz* activity deeper in the enemy's rear without having to divert it to operations in the zone nearer the front.

Air-assault brigades at front level operate independently, but in some cases *spetsnaz* units may direct the combat helicopters to their targets. It is sometimes possible to have joint operations conducted by men dropped from helicopters and to use helicopters from an air-assault brigade for evacuating the wounded and prisoners.

Airborne divisions operate in accordance with the plans of the commander-in-chief. If difficulties arise with the delivery of supplies to their units, they switch to partisan combat tactics. Co-operation between airborne divisions and *spetsnaz* units is not normally organised, although large-scale drops in the enemy's rear create a favourable situation for operations by all *spetsnaz* units.

Naval infantry are commanded by the same commander as naval *spetsnaz*: every fleet commander has one brigade of the latter and a brigade (or regiment) of infantry. Consequently these two formations, both intended for operations in the enemy's rear, co-operate very closely. Normally when the naval infantry makes a landing on an enemy coastline, their operation is preceded by, or accompanied by, *spetsnaz* operations in the same area. Groups of naval *spetsnaz* can, of course, operate independently of the naval infantry if they need to, especially in cases where the operations are expected to be in remote areas requiring special skills of survival or concealment.

There are two specific sets of circumstances in which superior headquarters organises direct co-operation between all units operating in the enemy rear. The first is when a combined attack offers the only possibility of destroying or capturing the target, and the second is when Soviet units in the enemy rear have suffered substantial losses and the Soviet command decides to make up improvised groups out of the remnants of the ragged units that are left.

In the course of an advance *spetsnaz* groups, as might be expected, co-operate very closely with the forward detachments.

A Soviet advance — a sudden break through the defences of the enemy in several places and the rapid forward movement of masses of troops, supported by an equal mass of aircraft and helicopters — is always co-ordinated with a simultaneous strike in the rear of the enemy by *spetsnaz* forces, airborne troops and naval infantry.

In other armies different criteria are applied to measure a commander's success — for example, what percentage of the enemy's forces have been destroyed by his troops. In the Soviet Army this is of secondary importance, and may be of no importance at all, because a commander's value is judged by one criterion only: the speed with which his troops advance.

To take the speed of advance as the sole measure of a commander's abilities is not so stupid as it might seem at first glance. As a guiding principle it forces all commanders to seek, find and exploit the weakest spots in the enemy's defences. It obliges the commander to turn the enemy's flank and to avoid getting caught up in unnecessary skirmishes. It also makes commanders make use of theoretically impassable areas to get to the rear of the enemy, instead of battering at his defences.

To find the enemy's weak spots a commander will send reconnaissance groups ahead, and forward detachments which he has assembled for the duration of the advance. Every commander of a regiment, division, army and, in some cases, of a front will form his own forward detachment. In a regiment the detachment normally includes a motor-rifle company with a tank platoon (or a tank company with a motor-rifle platoon); a battery of self-propelled howitzers; an anti-aircraft platoon; and an anti-tank platoon and sapper and chemical warfare units. In a division it will consist of a motor-rifle or tank battalion, with a tank or motor-rifle company as appropriate; an artillery battalion; anti-aircraft and anti-tank batteries; and a company of sappers and some support units. In an army the scale is correspondingly greater: two or three motor-rifle battalions; one or two tank battalions; two or three artillery battalions, a battalion of multi-barrelled rocket launchers; a few anti-aircraft batteries; an anti-tank battalion; and sappers and chemical warfare troops. Where a front makes up its own forward detachment it will consist of several regiments, most of them tank regiments. The success of each general (i.e. the speed at which he advances) is determined by the speed of his very best units. In practice this means that it is determined by the operations of the forward detachment which he sends into battle. Thus every general assembles his best units for that crucial detachment, puts his most determined officers in command, and puts at their disposal a large slice of his reinforcements. All this makes the forward detachment into a concentration of the strength of the main forces.

It often happens that very high-ranking generals are put in command of relatively small detachments. For example, the forward detachment of the 3rd Guards Tank Army in the Prague operation was commanded by General I. G. Ziberov, who was deputy chief of staff. (The detachment consisted of the 69th mechanised brigade, the 16th self-propelled artillery brigade, the 50th motorcycle regiment, and the 253rd independent penal company).

Every forward detachment is certainly very vulnerable. Let us imagine what the first day of a war in Europe would be like, when the main concentration of Soviet troops has succeeded in some places in making very small breaches in the defences of the forces of the Western powers. Taking advantage of these breaches, and of any other opportunities offered — blunders by the enemy, unoccupied sectors and the like — about a hundred forward detachments of regiments, about twenty-five more powerful forward detachments of divisions, and about eight even more powerful forward

detachments from armies have penetrated into the rear of the NATO forces. None of them has got involved in the fighting. They are not in the least concerned about their rear or their flanks. They are simply racing ahead without looking back.

This is very similar to the Vistula-Oder operation of 1945, on the eve of which Marshal G. K. Zhukov assembled all sixty-seven commanders of the forward detachments and demanded of each one: 100 kilometres forward progress on the first day of the operation. A hundred kilometres, irrespective of how the main forces were operating, and irrespective of whether the main forces succeeded in breaking through the enemy's defences. Every commander who advanced a hundred kilometres on the first day or averaged seventy kilometres a day for the first four days would receive the highest award — the Gold Star of a Hero of the Soviet Union. Everybody in the detachment would receive a decoration, and all the men undergoing punishment (every forward detachment has on its strength anything from a company to a battalion's worth of such men riding on the outside of the tanks) would have their offences struck out.

Say what you like about the lack of initiative in Soviet soldiers and officers. Just imagine giving men from a penal battalion such a task. If you succeed in not getting involved in the fighting, and if you manage to outflank the enemy and keep moving, we will strike out all your offences. Get involved in fighting and you will not only shed your blood, you will die a criminal too.

Operations by Soviet forward detachments are not restrained by any limitations. 'The operations of forward detachments must be independent and not restricted by the dividing lines,' the Soviet Military Encyclopaedia declares. The fact that the forward detachments may be cut off from the main force should not deter them. For example, on the advance in Manchuria in 1945 the 6th Guards Tank Army advanced rapidly towards the ocean, having crossed the desert, the apparently impregnable Khingan mountain range and the rice fields, and covering 810 kilometres in eleven days. But ahead of it were forward detachments, operating continually, which had rushed 150 to 200 kilometres ahead of the main force. When the officer in command of the front learnt of this spurt ahead (by quite unprotected detachments, which really had not a single support vehicle with them), he did not order the detachments to slow down; on the contrary, he ordered them to increase their speed still further, and not to worry about the distance separating them, however great it was. The more the forward detachments were separated from the main force, the better. The more unsuspected and strange the appearance of Soviet troops seems to the enemy, the greater the panic and the more successful the operations of both the forward detachments and the main Soviet troops.

Forward detachments were of enormous importance in the last war. The speed at which our troops advanced reached at times eighty to a hundred kilometres a day. Such a speed of advance in operations on such an enormous scale causes surprise even today. But it must always be remembered that this terrible rate of advance was to a great extent made possible by the operations of the forward detachments. These are the words of Army-General I.I. Gusev, the same general who from January to April 1945, from the Vistula to Berlin itself, commanded the forward detachment of the 11th Guards Tank Corps and the whole of the 1st Guards Tank Army.

In the last war the forward detachments pierced the enemy's defences with dozens of spearheads at the same time, and the main body of troops followed in their tracks. The forward detachments then destroyed in the enemy's rear only targets that were easy to destroy, and in many cases moved forward quickly enough to capture bridges before they were blown up. The reason the enemy had not blown them up was because his main forces were still wholly engaged against the main forces of the Red Army.

The role played by forward detachments has greatly increased in modern warfare. All Soviet military exercises are aimed at improving the operations of forward detachments. There are two very good reasons why the role of the forward detachments has grown in importance. The first is, predictably, that war has acquired a nuclear dimension. Nuclear weapons (and other modern means of fighting) need to be discovered and destroyed at the earliest possible opportunity. And the more Soviet troops there are on enemy territories, the less likelihood there is of their being destroyed by nuclear weapons. It will always be difficult for the enemy to make a nuclear strike against his own rear where not only are his own forces operating, and which are inhabited but where a strike would also be against his own civilian population.

A forward detachment, rushing far ahead and seeking out and destroying missile batteries, airfields, headquarters and communication lines resembles *spetsnaz* both in character and in spirit. It usually has no transport vehicles at all. It carries only what can be found room for in the tanks and armoured transporters, and its operations may last only a short time, until the fuel in the tanks gives out. All the same, the daring and dashing actions of the detachments will break up the enemy's defences, producing chaos and panic in his rear, and creating conditions in which the main force can operate with far greater chances of success.

In principle *spetsnaz* does exactly the same. The difference is that *spetsnaz* groups have greater opportunities for discovering important targets, whereas forward detachments have greater opportunities than *spetsnaz* for destroying them. Which is why the forward detachment of each regiment is closely linked up with the regiment's reconnaissance company secretly operating deep inside the enemy's defences. Similarly, the forward detachments of divisions are linked directly with divisional reconnaissance battalions, receiving a great deal of information from them and, by their swift reactions, creating better operating conditions for the reconnaissance battalions.

The forward detachment of an army, usually led by the deputy army commander, will be operating at the same time as the army's *spetsnaz* groups who will have been dropped 100 to 500 kilometres ahead. This means that the forward detachment may find itself in the same operational area as the army's *spetsnaz* groups as early as forty-eight hours after the start of the operation. At that point the deputy army commander will establish direct contact with the *spetsnaz* groups, receiving information from them, sometimes redirecting groups to more important targets and areas, helping the groups and receiving help from them. The *spetsnaz* group may, for example, capture a bridge and hold it for a very short time. The forward detachment simply has to be able to move fast enough to get to the bridge and take over with some of its men. The *spetsnaz* group will stay at the bridge, while the forward detachment runs ahead, and then, after the main body of Soviet forces has arrived at the bridge the *spetsnaz* group will again, after briefing, be dropped by parachute far ahead.

Sometimes *spetsnaz* at the front level will operate in the interests of the army's forward detachments, in which case the army's own *spetsnaz* will turn its attention to the most successful forward detachments of the army's divisions.

Forward detachments are a very powerful weapon in the hands of the Soviet commanders, who have great experience in deploying them. They are in reality the best units of the Soviet Army and in the course of an advance will operate not only in a similar way to *spetsnaz*, but in very close collaboration with it too. The success of operations by *spetsnaz* groups in strategic warfare depends ultimately on the skill and fighting ability of dozens of forward detachments which carry out lightning operations

to overturn the enemy's plans and frustrate his attempts to locate and destroy the *spetsnaz* groups.

Chapter 13. *Spetsnaz* and Deception

Secrecy and disinformation are the most effective weapons in the hands of the Soviet Army and the whole Communist system. With the aim of protecting military secrets and of disinforming the enemy a Chief Directorate of Strategic Camouflage (GUSM) was set up within the Soviet General Staff in the 1960s. The Russian term for 'camouflage' — *maskirovka* — is, like the word *razvedka*, impossible to translate directly. *Maskirovka* means everything relating to the preservation of secrets and to giving the enemy a false idea of the plans and intentions of the Soviet high command. *Maskirovka* has a broader meaning than 'deception' and 'camouflage' taken together.

The GUSM and the GRU use different methods in their work but operate on the same battlefield. The demands made of the officers of both organisations are more or less identical. The most important of these demands are: to be able to speak foreign languages fluently; and to know the enemy. It was no coincidence that when the GUSM was set up many senior officers and generals of the GRU were transferred to it. General Moshe Milshtein was one of them, and he had been one of the most successful heads the GRU had had; he spent practically the whole of his career in the West as an illegal¹. Milshtein speaks English, French and German fluently, and possibly other languages as well. He is the author of a secret textbook for GRU officers entitled *An Honourable Service*. I frequently attended lectures given by him about operations by Soviet 'illegals' and the theory upon which the practice of disinformation is based. But even the briefest study of the writings of this general in Soviet military journals, in the *Military-Historical Journal* (VIZ) for example, reveals that he is one of the outstanding Soviet experts in the field of espionage and disinformation.

¹ See Viktor Suvorov, *Soviet Military Intelligence* (London, 1984).

The GUSM is vast. It is continually gathering a colossal number of facts on three key subjects:

1. What the West knows about us.
2. What the West shows us it does not know.
3. What the West is trying to find out.

The GUSM has long-term plans covering what must be concealed and what must have attention drawn to it in the Soviet Army and armaments industry. The experts of the GUSM are constantly fabricating material so that the enemy should draw the wrong conclusions from the authentic information in his possession.

The extent of the powers given to the GUSM can be judged from the fact that at the beginning of the 1970s REB *osnaz* (radio-electronic warfare) was transferred from the control of the KGB to the control of the GUSM, though still preserving the name *osnaz*.

There are very close links existing between the GUSM and the GRU and between *spetsnaz* and the REB *osnaz*. In peacetime the REB *osnaz* transmits by radio

`top-secret' instructions from some Soviet headquarters to others. In time of war *spetsnaz* operations against headquarters and centres and lines of communications are conducted in the closest co-operation with the REB *osnaz*, which is ready to connect up with the enemy's lines of communication to transmit false information. An example of such an operation was provided in the manoeuvres of the Ural military district when a *spetsnaz* company operated against a major headquarters. *Spetsnaz* groups cut the communication lines and `destroyed' the headquarters and at the same time an REB *osnaz* company hooked into the enemy's lines and began transmitting instructions to the enemy in the name of the headquarters that had been wiped out.

Even in peacetime the GUSM operates in a great variety of ways. For example, the Soviet Union derives much benefit from the activities of Western pacifists. A fictitious pacifist movement has been set up in the Soviet Union and Professor Chazov, the personal physician of the General Secretary of the Communist Party, has been made head of it. There are some who say that the movement is controlled by the Soviet leadership through the person of Chazov. Chazov, in addition to being responsible for the health of the General Secretary, is a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, i.e. one of the leaders who has real power in his hands. There are very few people who can manipulate him.

The mighty machinery of the GUSM was brought into operation in order to give this Communist leader some publicity. General Moshe Milshtein himself arrived in London in April 1982 to attend a conference of doctors opposed to nuclear warfare. There were many questions that had to be put to the general. What did he have to do with medicine? Where had he served, in what regiments and divisions? Where had he come by his genuine English accent? Did all Soviet generals speak such good English? And were all Soviet generals allowed to travel to Great Britain and conduct pacifist propaganda, or was it a privilege granted to a select few?

The result of this publicity stunt by the GUSM is well known — the `pacifist' Chazov, who has never once been known to condemn the murder of children in Afghanistan or the presence of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia, and who persecutes opponents of Communism in the USSR, received the Nobel Prize.

`But,' as Stalin said, `in order to prepare new wars pacifism alone is not enough.'² That is why the Soviet leaders are preparing for another war not only with the aid of the pacifists but with the help of many other people and organisations which, knowingly or unwittingly, spread information which has been `made in the GUSM'.

² *Leningradskaya Pravda*, 14 July 1928.

One of the sources spreading Soviet military disinformation is the GRU's network of agents, and in particular the agents of *spetsnaz*.

In the preparation of a strategic operation the GUSM's most important task is to ensure that the operation is totally unexpected by the enemy, particularly the place where it is to take place and the time it is due to start; its nature, and the weapons the troops will be using; and the number of troops and scope of the operation. All these elements must be planned so that the enemy has not prepared to resist. This is

achieved by many years of intensive effort on the part of the GUSM at concealment. But concealment is twofold: the GUSM will, for example, conceal from the enemy advances in Soviet military science and the armaments industry, and at the same time demonstrate what the enemy wants to see.

This would provide material for a separate and lengthy piece of research. Here we are dealing only with *spetsnaz* and with what the GUSM does in connection with *spetsnaz*. GUSM experts have developed a whole system aimed at preventing the enemy from being aware of the existence of *spetsnaz* and ensuring that he should have a very limited idea of its strength and the nature of the operations it will conduct. Some of the steps it takes we have already seen. To summarise:

1. Every prospective member of *spetsnaz* is secretly screened for his general reliability long before he is called into the Army.

2. Every man joining *spetsnaz* or the GRU has to sign a document promising not to reveal the secret of its existence. Any violation of this undertaking is punished as spying — by the death sentence.

3. *Spetsnaz* units do not have their own uniform, their own badges or any other distinguishing mark, though it very often uses the uniform of the airborne troops and their badges. Naval *spetsnaz* wear the uniform of the naval infantry although they have nothing in common with that force. *Spetsnaz* units operating midget submarines wear the usual uniform of submariners. When they are in the countries of Eastern Europe the *spetsnaz* units wear the uniform of signals troops.

4. Not a single *spetsnaz* unit is quartered separately. They are all accommodated in military settlements along with airborne or air-assault troops. In the Navy *spetsnaz* units are accommodated in the military settlements of the naval infantry. The fact that they wear the same uniform and go through roughly the same kind of battle training makes it very difficult to detect *spetsnaz*. In Eastern Europe *spetsnaz* is located close to important headquarters because it is convenient to have them along with the signals troops. In the event of their being moved to military settlements belonging to other branches of the forces *spetsnaz* units immediately change uniform.

Agent units in *spetsnaz* are installed near specially well-defended targets — missile bases, penal battalions and nuclear ammunition stores.

5. In the various military districts and groups of forces *spetsnaz* troops are known by different names — as *reidoviki* ('raiders') in East Germany, and as *okhotniki* ('hunters') in the Siberian military district. *Spetsnaz* soldiers from different military districts who meet by chance consider themselves as part of different organisations. The common label *spetsnaz* is used only by officers among themselves.

6. *Spetsnaz* does not have its own schools or academies. The officer class is trained at the Kiev Higher Combined Officers' Training School (reconnaissance faculty) and at the Ryazan Higher Airborne School (special faculty). It is practically impossible to distinguish a *spetsnaz* student among the students of other faculties. Commanding officers and officers concerned with agent work are trained at the Military-Diplomatic Academy (the GRU Academy). I have already mentioned the use made of sports sections and teams for camouflaging the professional core of *spetsnaz*.

There are many other ways of concealing the presence of *spetsnaz* in a particular region and the existence of *spetsnaz* as a whole.

In *spetsnaz* everyone has his own nickname. As in the criminal underworld or at school, a person does not choose his own nickname, but is given it by others. A man may have several at the outset, then some of them are dropped until there remains

only the one that sounds best and most pleases the people he works with. The use of nicknames greatly increases the chances of keeping *spetsnaz* operations secret. The nicknames can be transmitted by radio without any danger. A good friend of mine was given the nickname Racing Pig. Suppose the head of Intelligence in a district sent the following radiogram, uncyphered: 'Racing Pig to go to post No. 10.' What could that tell an enemy if he intercepted it? On the other hand, the commander of the group will know the message is genuine, that it has been sent by one of his own men and nobody else. *Spetsnaz* seldom makes use of radio, and, if the head of Intelligence had to speak to the group again he would not repeat the name but would say another name to the deputy commander of the group: 'Dog's Heart to take orders from Gladiolus,' for example.

Before making a jump behind enemy lines, in battle or in training, a *spetsnaz* soldier will hand over to his company sergeant all his documents, private letters, photographs, everything he does not need on the campaign and everything that might enable someone to determine what unit he belongs to, his name, and so on. The *spetsnaz* soldier has no letters from the Russian alphabet on his clothes or footwear. There may be some figures which indicate the number he is known by in the Soviet armed forces, but that is all. An interesting point is that there are two letters in that number, and for the *spetsnaz* soldier they always select letters which are common to both the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets — A, K, X, and so forth. An enemy coming across the corpse of a *spetsnaz* soldier will find no evidence that it is that of a Soviet soldier. One could, of course, guess, but the man could just as easily be a Bulgar, a Pole or a Czech.

Spetsnaz operates in exceptionally unfavourable conditions. It can survive and carry out a given mission only if the enemy's attention is spread over a vast area and he does not know where the main blow is to be struck.

With this aim, drops of large numbers of *spetsnaz* troops are not carried out in a single area but in smaller numbers and in several areas at the same time. The dropping zones may be separated from each other by hundreds of kilometres, and apart from the main areas of operation for *spetsnaz* other, subsidiary areas are chosen as well: these are areas of real interest to *spetsnaz*, so as to make the enemy believe that that is the area where the main *spetsnaz* threat is likely to appear, and they are chosen as carefully as the main ones. The decision as to which area will be a prime one and which a subsidiary is taken by the high command on the very eve of the operation. Sometimes circumstances change so rapidly that a change in the area of operation may take place even as the planes are over enemy territory.

The deception of the enemy over the main and subsidiary areas of operation begins with the deception of the men taking part in the operation. Companies, battalions, regiments and brigades exist as single fighting units. But during the period of training for the operation, groups and detachments are formed in accordance with the actual situation and to carry out a specific task. The strength and armament of each group is worked out specially. Before carrying out an operation every detachment and every group is isolated from the other groups and detachments and is trained to carry out the operation planned for that particular group. The commander and his deputy are given the exact area of operations and are given information about enemy operations in the given area and about operations there by *spetsnaz* groups and detachments. Sometimes this information is very detailed (if groups and detachments have to operate jointly), at others it is only superficial, just enough to prevent neighbouring commanders getting in each other's way.

Sometimes the commander of a group or detachment is told the truth, sometimes he is deceived. A *spetsnaz* officer knows that he can be deceived, and that he cannot always detect with any certainty what is true and what is a lie.

Commanders of groups and detachments who are to take part in operations in reserve areas are usually told that their area is the main one and the most important, that there is already a large force of *spetsnaz* operating there or that such a force will soon appear there. The commander of a group that is operating in the main area may be told, on the contrary, that apart from his groups there are very few groups operating in the area. Irrespective of what the commander is told he is given quite specific tasks, for whose accomplishment he answers with his head in the most literal sense.

In any operation the GRU high command keeps a *spetsnaz* reserve on its own territory. Even in the course of the operation some groups may receive an order to withdraw from the main areas into the reserve areas. *Spetsnaz* reserves may be dropped into the reserve areas, which then become main areas of operations. In this way the enemy obtains information about *spetsnaz* simultaneously in many areas, and it is exceptionally difficult to determine where the main areas and where the reserve ones are. Consequently the enemy's main forces may be thrown against relatively small groups and detachments which are conducting real military operations but which are none the less a false target for the enemy. Even if the enemy establishes which are the main areas of *spetsnaz* operations the enemy may be too late. Many *spetsnaz* groups and detachments will already be leaving the area, but those that remain there will be ordered to step up their activity; the enemy thus gets the impression that this area is still the main one. So as not to dispel this illusion, the groups remaining in the area are ordered by the Soviet high command to prepare to receive fresh *spetsnaz* reinforcements, are sent increased supplies and are continually told that they are doing the main job. But they are not told that their comrades left the area long ago for a reserve area that has now become a main one.

At the same time as the main and reserve areas are chosen, false areas of operations for *spetsnaz* are set. A false, or phoney, area is created in the following way. A small *spetsnaz* group with a considerable supply of mines is dropped into the area secretly. The group lays the mines on important targets, setting the detonators in such a way that all the mines will blow up at roughly the same time. Then automatic radio transmitters are fixed up in inaccessible places which are also carefully mined. This done, the *spetsnaz* group withdraws from the area and gets involved in operations in a quite different place. Then another *spetsnaz* group is dropped into the same area with the task of carrying out an especially daring operation.

This group is told that it is to be operating in an area of special importance where there are many other groups also operating. At an agreed moment the Soviet air force contributes a display of activity over the particular area. For this purpose real planes are used, which have just finished dropping genuine groups in another area. The route they follow has to be deliberately complicated, with several phoney places where they drop torn parachutes and shroud-lines, airborne troops' equipment, boxes of ammunition, tins of food, and so forth.

Next day the enemy observes the following scene. In an area of dense forest in which there are important targets there are obvious traces of the presence of Soviet parachutists. In many places in the same area there had been simultaneous explosions. In broad daylight a group of Soviet terrorists had stopped the car of an important official on the road and brutally murdered him and got away with his case full of documents. At the same time the enemy had noted throughout the area a high degree of activity by *spetsnaz* radio transmitters using a system of rapid and super-

rapid transmission which made it very difficult to trace them. What does the enemy general have to do, with all these facts on his desk?

To lead the enemy further astray *spetsnaz* uses human dummies, clothed in uniform and appropriately equipped. The dummies are dropped in such a way that the enemy sees the drop but cannot immediately find the landing place. For this purpose the drop is carried out over mountains or forests, but far away from inhabited places and places where the enemy's troops are located. The drops are usually made at dawn, sunset or on a moonlit night. They are never made in broad daylight because it is then seen to be an obvious piece of deception, while on a dark night the drop may not be noticed at all.

The enemy will obviously discover first the dummies in the areas which are the *main* places for *spetsnaz* operations. The presence of the dummies may raise doubts in the enemy's mind about whether the dummies indicate that it is not a false target area but the very reverse.... The most important thing is to disorient the enemy completely. If there are few *spetsnaz* forces available, then it must be made to appear that there are lots of them around. If there are plenty of them, it should be made to appear that there are very few. If their mission is to destroy aircraft it must look as if their main target is a power station, and *vice versa*. Sometimes a group will lay mines on targets covering a long distance, such as oil pipelines, electricity power lines, roads and bridges along the roads. In such cases they set the first detonators to go off with a very long delay and as they advance they make the delay steadily shorter. The group then withdraws to one side and changes its direction of advance completely. The successive explosions then take place in the opposite direction to the one in which the group was moving.

Along with operations in the main, reserve and false areas there may also be operations by *spetsnaz* professional groups working in conditions of special secrecy. The Soviet air force plays no part in such operations. Even if the groups are dropped by parachute it takes place some distance away and the groups leave the drop zone secretly. Relatively small but very carefully trained groups of professional athletes are chosen for such operations. Their movements can be so carefully concealed that even their acts of terrorism are carried out in such a way as to give the enemy the impression that the particular tragedy is the result of some natural disaster or of some other circumstances unconnected with Soviet military intelligence or with terrorism in general. All the other activity of *spetsnaz* serves as a sort of cover for such specially trained groups. The enemy concentrates his attention on the main, reserve and false target areas, not suspecting the existence of secret areas in which the organisation is also operating: secret areas which could very easily be the most dangerous for the enemy.

Chapter 14. Future Prospects

Spetsnaz continues to grow. In the first place its ranks are swelling. In the next few years *spetsnaz* companies on the army level are expected to become battalions, and there is much evidence to suggest that this process has already begun. Such a reorganisation would mean an increase in the strength of *spetsnaz* by 10,000 men. But that is not the end of it. Already at the end of the 1970s the possibility was being discussed of increasing the number of regiments at the strategic level from three to five. The brigades at front level could, without any increase in the size of the support units, raise the number of fighting battalions from three or four to five. The

possibilities of increasing the strength of *spetsnaz* are entirely realistic and evoke legitimate concern among Western experts.¹

¹ See Appendices for notes on organisation.

The principal direction being taken by efforts to improve the quality of the *spetsnaz* formations is mechanisation. No one disputes the advantages of mechanisation. A mechanised *spetsnaz* soldier is able to withdraw much more quickly from the dropping zone. He can cover great distances much more quickly and inspect much larger areas than can a soldier on foot. And he can get quickly into contact with the enemy and inflict sudden blows on him, and then get quickly away from where the enemy may strike him and pursue him.

But the problem of mechanisation is a difficult one. The *spetsnaz* soldier operates in forests, marshland, mountains, deserts and even in enormous cities. *Spetsnaz* needs a vehicle capable of transporting a *spetsnaz* soldier in all these conditions, and one that enables him to be as silent and practically invisible as he is now.

There have been many scientific conferences dealing with the question of providing *spetsnaz* with a means of transport, but they have not yet produced any noticeable results. Soviet experts realise that it will not be possible to create a single machine to meet *spetsnaz* needs, and that they will have to develop a whole family of vehicles with various features, each of them intended for operations in particular conditions.

One of the ways of increasing the mobility of *spetsnaz* behind enemy lines is to provide part of the unit with very lightweight motorcycles capable of operating on broken terrain. Various versions of the snow-tractor are being developed for use in northern regions. *Spetsnaz* also uses cross-country vehicles. Some of them amount to no more than a platform half a metre high, a metre and a half wide and two or three metres long mounted on six or eight wheels. Such a vehicle can easily be dropped by parachute, and it has considerable cross-country ability in very difficult terrain, including marshland and sand. It is capable of transporting a *spetsnaz* group for long distances, and in case of necessity the group's base can be moved around on such vehicles while the group operates on foot.

The introduction of such vehicles and motorcycles into *spetsnaz* does more than increase its mobility; it also increases its fire-power through the use of heavier armament that can be transported on the vehicles, as well as a larger supply of ammunition.

The vehicles, motorcycles and snow-tractors are developments being decided today, and in the near future we shall see evidence that these ideas are being put into practice. In the more distant future the Soviet high command wants to see the *spetsnaz* soldier airborne. The most likely solution will be for each soldier to have an apparatus attached to his back which will enable him to make jumps of several tens or even hundreds of metres. Such an apparatus could act as a universal means of transport in any terrain, including mountains. Since the beginning of the 1950s intensive research has been going on in the Soviet Union on this problem. It would appear that there have so far been no tangible achievements in this field, but there has been no reduction in the effort put into the research, despite many failures.

The same objective — to make the *spetsnaz* soldier airborne, or at least capable of big leaps — has also been pursued by the Kamov design office, which has for several decades, along with designing small helicopters, been trying to create a midjet

helicopter sufficient for just one man. Army-General Margelov once said that 'an apparatus must be created that will eliminate the boundary between the earth and the sky.' Earth-bound vehicles cannot fly, while aircraft and helicopters are defenceless on the ground. Margelov's idea was that they should try to create a very light apparatus that would enable a soldier to flit like a dragon-fly from one leaf to another. What they needed was to turn the Soviet soldier operating behind enemy lines into a sort of insect capable of operating both on the ground and in the air (though not very high up) and also of switching from one state to the other without effort.

Every farmer knows that it is easier to kill a wild buffalo that is ruining his crops than to kill a mass of insects that have descended on his plants at night. The Soviet high command dreams of a day when the neighbour's garden can be invaded not only by buffaloes but by mad elephants too, and swarms of voracious insects at the same time. On a more practical basis for now, intensive research is being conducted in the Soviet Union to develop new ways of dropping men by parachute. The work is testing out a variety of new ideas, one such being the 'container drop', in other words the construction of a container with several men in it which would be dropped on one freight parachute. This method makes it possible to reduce considerably the amount of time set aside for training soldiers how to jump by parachute: training time which can be better spent on more useful things. The container enables the people in it to start firing at targets as they are landing and immediately afterwards. The container method makes it much easier to keep the men together in one spot and solves the problem of assembling a group after it has been dropped. But there are a whole lot of technical problems connected with the development of such containers for air drops, and I am not competent to judge when they may be solved.

Another idea being studied is the possibility of constructing parachutes that can glide; hybrid creations combining the qualities of the parachute and the hang-glider. This would make it possible for the transport aircraft to fly along the least dangerous routes and to drop the parachutists over safe areas far from the target they are making for. A man using his own gliding parachute can descend slowly or remain at one level or even climb higher. Since they are able to control the direction of their flight the *spetsnaz* groups can approach their targets noiselessly from various directions.

The hang-glider, especially one equipped with a very light motor, is the subject of enormous interest to the GRU. It makes it possible not only to fly from one's own territory to the enemy's territory without using transport planes, but also to make short flights on the enemy's territory so as to penetrate to targets, to evade any threat from the enemy and to perform other tasks.

The hang-glider with a motor (the *motodeltoplan*) is the cheapest flying machine and the one easiest to control. The motor has made it possible to take off from quite small, even patches of ground. It is no longer necessary to clamber up a hillside in order to take off. But the most important feature of the motorised hand-glider is, of course, the concealment it provides. Experiments show that very powerful radar systems are often quite unable to detect a hang-glider. Its flight is noiseless, because the motor is used only for taking off and gaining height. By flying with the motor shut off the man on the hang-glider is protected from heat-seeking means of detection and attack.

The distance that motorised hang-gliders can fly is quite sufficient for *spetsnaz*. It is enough to allow a man to take off quite a long way behind the frontier, cross it and land deep in the enemy's rear. Flight in a dangerous area can be carried out at very low altitudes. They are now developing in the Soviet Union a piece of equipment that will make it possible for motorised hang-gliders to fly at very low altitudes following the contours of the ground. Flights will have to take place at night and in conditions of

bad visibility, and a simple, lightweight but reliable navigation aid is being developed too.

The motorised hang-glider can be used for other purposes apart from transporting *spetsnaz* behind the enemy's lines. It can be used for identifying and even for destroying especially important enemy targets. Experiments show that the *deltoplan* can carry light machine-guns, grenade-launchers and rockets, which makes it an exceptionally dangerous weapon in the hands of *spetsnaz*. The main danger presented by these 'insects' is of course not to be found in their individual qualities but in their numbers. Any insect on its own can easily be swatted. But a swarm of insects is a problem which demands serious thought: it is not easy to find a way of dealing with them.

The officers commanding the GRU know exactly the sort of *deltoplan* that *spetsnaz* needs in the foreseeable future. It has to be a machine that needs no more than twenty-five metres to take off, has a rate of climb of not less than a metre per second, and has a motor with a power of not more than 30 kilowatts which must have good heat isolation and make a noise of not more than 55 decibels. The machine must be capable of lifting a payload of 120 to 150 kilograms (reconnaissance equipment, armaments, ammunition). Work on its development, like the work carried out in the 1930s on the first midget submarines, is being carried on simultaneously and independently by several groups of designers.

The GRU realises that hang-gliders can be very vulnerable in daytime and that they are also very sensitive to changes in the weather. There are three possible ways of overcoming these difficulties: improving the construction of the machines themselves and improving the professional skills of the pilots; employing them suddenly and in large numbers on a wide front, using many combinations of direction and height; and using them only in conjunction with many other weapons and ways of fighting, and the use of a great variety of different devices and tricks to neutralise the enemy.

At the same time as developing ways of dropping people in the enemy's rear, work is being done on methods for returning *spetsnaz* units to their own territory. This is not as important as the business of dropping them; nevertheless there are situations when it is necessary to find some way of transporting someone from a group, or a whole group, back to Soviet territory. For many years now this has sometimes been done with low-flying aircraft, but this is a risky method which has yet to be perfected. Better methods are needed for evacuating men from territories where there is no sea nearby, where the helicopter cannot be used and where an aircraft cannot land.

A Soviet general named Meshcheryakov opened up a vast area for study and research when he made the proposal that the armed forces should 'create for *spetsnaz* the kind of conditions in which no one should interfere with its work'. There are many problems here which Soviet science is concentrating on trying to solve. Who interferes with the work of *spetsnaz*? Primarily the enemy's radar system. Radar installations interfere with the activity of the entire Soviet Army. In order to open the way for the Soviet Army into the territory of the enemy it is necessary first of all to 'blind' the enemy's radar system. That is always one of *spetsnaz*'s principal tasks. But to carry it out, the radars obstructing *spetsnaz* itself have somehow to be put out of action. One solution to this problem is, prior to dropping the main *spetsnaz* force, to send small groups behind the enemy's lines who will clear the way for *spetsnaz* which will in turn clear the way for the whole Soviet Army. Such a solution can be regarded as satisfactory only because no other solution has so far been found. But terrific effort is being put into the work of finding some other

solution. The Soviet high command needs a technical solution, some method that would make it possible, even for a short period, simultaneously to 'blind' the enemy's radar over a fairly wide area, so as to give the first wave of *spetsnaz* the opportunity to carry out its mission.

Anti-aircraft systems are the main killers of *spetsnaz*. The soldier in a transport aircraft is utterly defenceless. One quite small missile, or even a shell, can kill *spetsnaz* troops in whole groups. What can be done to put out of action the anti-aircraft defence systems at least on a narrow sector before the arrival of the main force of *spetsnaz* on the enemy's territory? Much thought is being devoted to this. The solution may be technical. GRU's spies may help. But *spetsnaz* can help itself by recruiting an agent long before the war begins and teaching him what to do on receipt of a sign from the centre.

Once it has arrived in enemy territory *spetsnaz* is vulnerable from the moment of landing to the moment of meeting up with its own troops.

In order to increase its effectiveness and create conditions in which 'no one should interfere with its work' intensive work is being done on the development of jamming stations to be used in areas where *spetsnaz* is operating, to prevent the enemy's electronic devices (radio receivers and transmitters, radars, optical-electronic devices, computers and any other instruments) from working normally so as to interfere with the co-ordination of the various enemy forces operating against *spetsnaz*.

Aircraft and helicopters cause a great deal of trouble for *spetsnaz*. *Spetsnaz* already has fairly impressive means of its own for defending itself from air attacks, but work is now going on to provide *spetsnaz* groups with a reliable anti-helicopter weapon, and to develop a weapon capable of covering considerable areas or even of establishing zones free of all air activity by the enemy.

Finally, weapons systems are being developed of which the main purpose will be to isolate fairly large areas from penetration by the enemy's ground forces. This involves the use of mines and automatic guns mounted and hidden near bridges, crossroads, tunnels and so forth, which operate automatically and destroy the enemy trying to transfer reinforcements into the area where *spetsnaz* is operating and so to interfere with its work.

The process of seeking out especially important targets in the enemy's territory will in future be carried out not so much by *spetsnaz* men on foot or even 'jumping' as by automatic machines of a fairly simple (not by today's standards perhaps, but certainly by tomorrow's) and reliable construction.

Work has been going on for quite a long time on the development of light (up to 100 kilograms) cross-country vehicles with remote control. The vehicles tested have mostly been driven by electricity. They have been steered by remote control with the aid of television cameras installed inside them, similar to some modern bomb-disposal equipment. Apart from using them to find the targets, experiments have been conducted into using them to destroy targets by means of a grenade-launcher mounted in the vehicle or an explosive charge that detonates on contact with the target. The rapid advances in electronics open up enormous possibilities for the development of light remote-controlled vehicles capable of covering large areas quickly and noiselessly and of destroying targets in enemy territory.

Pilotless aircraft have long been used for identifying targets over large areas, and the Soviet Union is a leader in this field. Take, for example, the Soviet strategic high-flying pilotless rocket-driven plane known as the 'Yastreb'. A tremendous amount of work is being done on the development of relatively small pilotless spy-planes. In the

future such planes will take off not only from Soviet territory but from enemy territory as well. Soviet airborne troops and *spetsnaz* have for long been very keenly interested in the possibility of developing a very light pilotless aircraft that could be put together and launched on enemy territory, survey vast areas and transmit a picture to Soviet troops. The ideal aircraft would be one carrying not only the equipment for carrying out reconnaissance but an explosive charge as well. Once it discovered the target and transmitted a picture of it, it could attack it independently. There is nothing fantastic about this plan. Modern technology is quite capable of building such an aircraft. The problem is simply to make the aircraft sufficiently light, cheap, reliable and accurate.

Advances in *spetsnaz* follow the usual paths. While this research goes on at the cutting edge of Soviet military power: improvements are being made to the familiar weapons and increases in the range, accuracy and fire-power of grenade-launchers, rifles and other armament; improvements in the quality of footwear, clothes, soldiers' equipment and means of communication of all kinds; and reductions in the weight of weapons like mines along with an increase in their destructive potential.

Chapter 15. *Spetsnaz*'s First World War

I was standing on the top of an enormous skyscraper in New York when I saw King Kong. The huge gorilla surveyed Manhattan triumphantly from a dizzy height. Of course I knew it wasn't real. But there was something both frightening and symbolic in that huge black figure.

I learnt later that the gorilla was a rubber one, that it had been decided to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the showing of the first film about King Kong by creating a gigantic inflatable model of the beast and placing it high above New York. The rubber monster was hauled up and swayed about in the wind. From the technical point of view the operation had been a real triumph by the engineers and workmen who had taken part in it. But it was not an entire success. The monster turned out to be too huge, with the result that holes appeared in its body through which the air could escape. So the gigantic muscular frame quickly collapsed into a shapeless bag. They had to pump more air into it, but the harder they pumped the bigger the holes became and the quicker the air escaped from the monster. So they had to keep on pumping....

The Communist leaders have also created a rubber monster and have hauled it up to a dizzy height. The monster is known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the Soviet leaders are faced with a dilemma: to expand or to decline rapidly and become a flabby sack. It is interesting to note that the Soviet Union became a superpower in the course of the most destructive war in the history of civilisation, in spite of the fact that it suffered the greatest loss of life and the greatest destruction on its own territory. It has become a military superpower and perhaps war is essential for its existence.

I do not know how or when World War Three will start. I do not know exactly how the Soviet high command plans to make use of *spetsnaz* in that war: the first world war in which *spetsnaz* will be a major contributor. I do not wish to predict the future. In this chapter I shall describe how *spetsnaz* will be used at the beginning of that war as I imagine it. It is not my task to describe what will happen. But I can describe what *might happen*.

The last month of peace, as in other wars, has an almost palpable air of crisis about it. Incidents, accidents, small disasters add to the tension. Two trains collide on a railway bridge in Cologne because the signalling system is out of order. The bridge is seriously damaged and there can be no traffic over it for the next two months.

In the port of Rotterdam a Polish supertanker bursts into flames. Because of an error by the captain the tanker is far too close to the oil storage tanks on the shore, and the burning oil spreads around the harbour. For two weeks fire brigades summoned from practically the whole country fight an heroic battle with the flames. The port suffers tremendous losses. The fire appears to have spread at a quite incredible speed, and some experts are of the opinion that the Polish tanker was not the only cause of the fire, that the fire broke out simultaneously in many places.

In the Panama Canal the *Varna*, a Bulgarian freighter loaded with heavy containers, rams the lock gates by mistake. Experts reckoned that the ship should have remained afloat, but for some reason she sinks there and then. To reopen the canal could well take many months. The Bulgarian government sends its apologies and declares itself ready to pay for all the work involved.

In Washington, as the President's helicopter is taking off, several shots are fired at it from sniper's rifles. The helicopter is only slightly damaged and the crew succeed in bringing it down again safely. No one in the craft is hurt. Responsibility for the attack is claimed by a previously unknown organisation calling itself 'Revenge for Vietnam'.

There is a terrorist explosion at Vienna airport.

A group of unidentified men attack the territory of the British military base in Cyprus with mortars.

A serious accident takes place on the most important oil pipeline in Alaska. The pumping stations break down and the flow of oil falls to a trickle.

In West Germany there are several unsuccessful attempts on the lives of American generals.

In the North Sea the biggest of the British oil rigs tips over and sinks. The precise reason for this is not established, although experts believe that corrosion of main supports is the culprit.

In the United States an epidemic of some unidentified disease breaks out and spreads rapidly. It seems to affect port areas particularly, such as San Francisco, Boston, Charleston, Seattle, Norfolk and Philadelphia.

There are explosions practically every day in Paris. The main targets are the government districts, communication centres and military headquarters. At the same time terrible forest fires are raging in the South of France.

All these operations — because of course none of these events is an accident — and others like them are known officially in the GRU as the 'preparatory period', and unofficially as the 'overture'. The overture is a series of large and small operations the purpose of which is, before actual military operations begin, to weaken the enemy's morale, create an atmosphere of general suspicion, fear and uncertainty, and divert the attention of the enemy's armies and police forces to a huge number of different targets, each of which may be the object of the next attack.

The overture is carried by agents of the secret services of the Soviet satellite countries and by mercenaries recruited by intermediaries. The principal method employed at this stage is 'grey terror', that is, a kind of terror which is not conducted in the name of the Soviet Union. The Soviet secret services do not at this stage leave their visiting cards, or leave other people's cards. The terror is carried out in the name of already existing extremist groups not connected in any way with the Soviet Union, or in the name of fictitious organisations.

The GRU reckons that in this period its operations should be regarded as natural disasters, actions by forces beyond human control, mistakes committed by people, or as terrorist acts by organisations not connected with the Soviet Union.

The terrorist acts carried out in the course of the 'overture' require very few people, very few weapons and little equipment. In some cases all that may be needed is one man who has as a weapon nothing more than a screwdriver, a box of matches or a glass ampoule. Some of the operations can have catastrophic consequences. For example, an epidemic of an infectious disease at seven of the most important naval bases in the West could have the effect of halving the combined naval might of the Soviet Union's enemies.

The 'overture' could last from several weeks to several months, gradually gathering force and embracing fresh regions. At the same time the GUSM would become involved. Photographs compromising a NATO chief appear on the front pages of Western newspapers. A scandal explodes. It appears that some of the NATO people have been having meetings with high-ranking Soviet diplomats and handing over top secret papers. All efforts to refute the story only fuel the fire. The public demands the immediate dismissal of NATO's chiefs and a detailed enquiry. Fresh details about the affair are published in the papers and the scandal increases in scope. At that moment the KGB and GRU can take out and dust off a tremendous quantity of material and put it into circulation. The main victims now are the people whom the Soviets had tried to recruit but failed. Now carefully edited and annotated materials get into the hands of the press. Soviet Intelligence has tried to recruit thousands, even tens of thousands, of people in its time. They include young lieutenants who have now become generals and third secretaries who have now become ambassadors. All of them rejected Soviet efforts to recruit them, and now Soviet Intelligence avenges their refusal. The number of scandalous affairs increases. The nations discover to their surprise that there are very few people to be trusted. The Soviet intelligence service has nothing to lose if the press gets hold of material showing that it tried to recruit a French general, without saying how the attempt ended. It has even less to lose on the eve of war. That is why the newspapers are full of demands for investigations and reports of resignations, dismissals and suicides. The best way of killing a general is to kill him with his own hands.

There is a marked increase in the strength of the peace movement. In many countries there are continual demands to make the country neutral and not to support American foreign policy, which has been discredited. At this point the 'grey terror' gathers scope and strength and in the last days of peace reaches its peak.

From the first moment of the first day of war the main forces of *spetsnaz* go into action. From then on the terror is conducted in the name of the Soviet Union and of the Communist leadership: 'red terror'.

But between the 'grey' and the 'red' terror there may be an intermediate period — the 'pink' terror, when active military operations have not yet begun and there is still peace, but when some of the best *spetsnaz* units have already gone into action. The situation is complicated by the fact that, on the one hand, Soviet fighting units are already in battle, but that, on the other hand, they are not yet operating in the name of the Soviet Union. This is an exceptionally risky moment for the Soviet high command. But he who risks nothing gains nothing. The Soviet commanders want to gain a great deal, and so are ready to risk a lot. A great deal has of course been done to reduce the level of risk. Only a relatively small number of *spetsnaz* troops take part in the 'pink' terror, but they are the best people in *spetsnaz* — professional athletes of Olympic class. Everything has been done to make sure that not one of them should fall into the hands of the enemy before the outbreak of war. A great deal has also been done to ensure that, if one of them should fall into enemy hands at that

moment, it would be very difficult to establish his connection with any country whatsoever.

The 'pink' terror may continue for no more than a few hours. But those are the most important hours and minutes — the very last hours and minutes of peace. It is very important that those hours and minutes should be spoilt for the enemy and used for the maximum advantage to the Soviet side. It must be pointed out that the 'pink' terror may not be carried out at all. It is used only when there is absolute certainty of the success of the operations and equal certainty that the enemy will not be able in the remaining hours and minutes to assess the situation correctly and strike the first pre-emptive blow.

For Soviet Communists the month of August has a special significance. It was in August that the First World War began, which resulted in revolutions in Russia, Germany and Hungary. In August 1939 Georgi Zhukov succeeded in doing something that no one before him had managed to do: with a sudden blow he routed a group of Japanese forces in the Far East. It is possible that that blow had very far-reaching consequences: Japan decided against attacking the Soviet Union and chose to advance in other directions. Also in August 1939 a pact was signed in the Kremlin which opened the flood gates for the Second World War, as a result of which the USSR became a super-power. In August 1945 the Soviet Union carried out a treacherous attack on Japan and Manchuria. In the course of three weeks of intensive operations huge territories roughly equal in area and population to Eastern Europe were 'liberated'. In August 1961 the Soviet Union built the Berlin Wall, in violation of international agreements it had signed. In August 1968 the Soviet Army 'liberated' Czechoslovakia and, to its great surprise, did not meet with any opposition from the West. Suppose the Soviet Communists again choose August for starting a war....

On 12 August, at 0558 local time, a van comes to a halt on the vast empty parking lot in front of a supermarket in Washington. Three men open the doors of the van, roll out the fuselage of a light aircraft and attach its wings. A minute later its motor bursts into life. The plane takes off and disappears into the sky. It has no pilot. It is controlled by radio with the aid of very simple instruments, only slightly more complicated than those used by model aircraft enthusiasts. The plane climbs to about 200 metres and immediately begins to descend in the direction of the White House. A minute later a mighty explosion shakes the capital of the United States. The screaming of sirens on police cars, fire engines and ambulances fills the city.

Three minutes later a second plane sweeps across the centre of the city and there is a second explosion in the place where the White House once stood. The second plane has taken off from a section of highway under construction, and has a quite different control system. Two cars with radio beacons in them have been left earlier in the middle of the city. The beacons have switched on automatically a few seconds before the plane's take-off. The automatic pilot is guided by the two beacons and starts to descend according to a previously worked-out trajectory. The second plane has been sent off by a second group operating independently of the first one.

It was a simple plan: if the first plane did not destroy the White House the second would. If the first plane did destroy the White House then a few minutes later all the heads of the Washington police would be near where the explosion had taken place. The second plane would kill many of them.

At 0606 all radio and television channels interrupt their normal programmes and report the destruction of the White House and the possible death of the President of the United States.

At 0613 the programme known as Good Morning America is interrupted and the Vice-President of the USA appears. He announces a staggering piece of news: there has been an attempt to seize power in the country on the part of the leaders of the armed forces. The President of the United States has been killed. The Vice-President appeals to everyone in the armed forces to remain where they are and not to carry out any orders from senior officers for the next twenty-four hours, because the orders would be issued by traitors shortly to be removed from their posts and arrested.

Soon afterwards many television channels across the country cease transmitting....

The Soviet military leaders know that if it doesn't prove possible to destroy the President of the United States in peacetime, it will be practically impossible to do so at a time of crisis. The President will be in an underground, or airborne, command post, somewhere extremely inaccessible and extremely well guarded.

Consequently the leaders, while not abandoning attempts to kill the President (for which purpose several groups of assassins with every kind of weapon, including anti-aircraft missiles, have been dropped in the country), decide to carry out an operation aimed at causing panic and confusion. If it proves impossible to kill the President then they will have to reduce his capacity to rule the country and its armed forces at the most critical moment.

To carry out this task the Soviets have secretly transferred to Washington a *spetsnaz* company from the first *spetsnaz* regiment at the strategic level. A large part of the company is made up of women. The entire complement of the company is professional athletes of Olympic standard. It has taken several months to transfer the whole company to Washington. The athletes have arrived in the guise of security men, drivers and technicians working in the Soviet embassy and other Soviet establishments, and their weapons and equipment have been brought in in containers covered by diplomatic privilege. The company has been split into eight groups to carry out its mission. Each group has its own organisation, structure, weapons and equipment. To carry out their tasks some of the groups will have to make contact with secret agents recruited a long time previously by the GRU *rezidentura*.

On 11 August the GRU *rezident* in Washington, a major-general known by the code-name of 'Mudry' (officially a civilian and a high-ranking diplomat) receives an encyphered telegram consisting of one single word — 'Yes'. On the *rezident's* orders the *spetsnaz* company leave their places of work. Some of them simply go back home. Some are transported secretly in the boots of their cars by GRU officers and dropped in the woods round the city, in empty underground garages and other secluded places.

The group commanders gather their groups together in previously agreed places and set about carrying out their tasks.

Group No. 1 consists of three men and the group is backed up by one secret agent. The agent works as a mechanic at an airport. In his spare time he builds flying models of aircraft of various sizes. This particular model was designed by the best Soviet aircraft designers and put together in America from spares bought in the open market. The agent himself does not play any part in the operation. A van containing a light radio-guided aircraft and its separate wings has been standing in his garage for some months. What the aircraft is for and to whom it belongs the agent does not know. He only knows that someone has the keys to the garage and that that person can at any moment come and take the van along with the aircraft. In the middle of the night

the *spetsnaz* group drives the van out into the forest where they take the explosive charges from a secret hiding place and prepare the plane for flight. At dawn the van is standing in the deserted parking lot.

Group No. 2 is doing roughly the same at that time. But this group has three agents working for it, two of whom have left their cars with radio beacons parked in precisely defined spots in the centre of the city.

Group No. 3 consists of fifteen *spetsnaz* men and five experts from the REB *osnaz*. They are all wearing police uniforms. At night the group kidnaps the director of a television company and his family. Leaving the family at home as hostages guarded by three *spetsnaz* men, the rest of the group make their way to the studios, capturing two more highly placed officials on their way, also as hostages, but without giving cause for noise or panic among the staff. Then, with guns threatening them and supervised by Soviet electronics experts, the director and his assistants insert, instead of the usual advertising programme, a video cassette which the commander of the group has given him. The video cassette has been made up in advance in the Soviet Union. The role of the Vice-President is played by an actor.

The Soviet high command knows that it is very difficult to cut into American military channels. If it is at all possible, then at best it will be possible to do no more than overhear conversations or interrupt them. It is practically impossible to use them for transmitting false orders at the strategic level. That is why it is decided to make use of the civilian television network: it is difficult to get into a television studio, but it is possible and there are many to choose from. Operations are carried out simultaneously in several different cities against various TV companies. If the operation succeeds in only one city it will not matter — millions of people will be disoriented at the most critical moment.

The operational plan has provided that, just after the 'Vice-President' has spoken several retransmitters will be destroyed by other *spetsnaz* groups and one of the American communication satellites will be shot down 'by mistake' by a Soviet satellite. This is intended to deprive the President and the real Vice-President of the opportunity to refute the false declaration.

But events do not go entirely according to plan. The President succeeds in addressing the people and issuing a denial of the report. After the television network throughout America has suffered such major damage, the radio immediately becomes the principal means of communication. Radio commentators produce different commentaries about what is happening. The majority of them report that it is difficult to say which report is genuine and which was false, but that the only fact about which there is no doubt is that the White House has been destroyed.

At the moment when all these events are taking place in Washington another *spetsnaz* company from the same regiment is ordered by the GRU *rezident* in New York to carry out the same operation but on a much larger scale. They do not make use of radio-guided aircraft, but seize two television studios and one radio studio which they use for transmitting the same false report. Five other *spetsnaz* groups emerge from official Soviet offices and make open, armed attacks on underground cables and some radio and TV transmitting and receiving aerials. They manage to damage them and also some transformer stations, as a result of which millions of TV screens go blank.

A few hours later *spetsnaz* detachment I-M-7 of 120 men lands in New York harbour from a freighter sailing under a Liberian flag. Using its fire-power the detachment makes its way to the nearest subway station and, splitting into small groups and seizing a train with hostages, sets about destroying the underground communications of the city.

In the area around the berths of America's huge aircraft-carriers and nuclear submarines in Norfolk, several mini-submersibles are discovered, as well as underwater saboteurs with aqualungs.

In Alaska eighteen different places are recorded where small groups have tried to land from Soviet naval vessels, submarines and aircraft. Some of the groups have been destroyed as they landed, others have managed to get back to their ships or, after landing successfully, hidden in the forests.

Spetsnaz detachment I-S-7 consisting of eighty-two men lands on the coast of Mexico, immediately commandeers private cars, and the next night, using their firepower and new mobility, cross the United States border.

Small *spetsnaz* groups land and use routes and methods employed by illegal immigrants, while others make use of paths and methods used by drug dealers.

Islands and the military installations on them are more vulnerable to sabotage operations, and at the same moment *spetsnaz* groups are landing on Okinawa and Guam, on Diego Garcia, in Greenland and dozens of other islands on which the West has bases.

Spetsnaz group 2-S-13 has spent three weeks aboard a small Soviet fishing vessel fishing close to the shores of Ireland. On receiving the signal '393939' the ship's captain gives the order to cut the nets, switch off the radio, radar and navigation lights and set course at top speed for the shores of Great Britain.

In darkness two light speed-boats are lowered from the side of the ship. They are big enough to take the whole group. In the first boat is the group commander, a lieutenant with the code-name of 'Shakespeare', a radio operator, a machine-gunner and two snipers. In the second boat is the deputy group commander, a junior lieutenant with the code-name 'Poet', two soldiers with flame-throwers and two snipers. Each man has a supply of food for three days, which is supposed to be used only in the event of being pursued for a long period. For general purposes the group has to obtain its food independently, as best it can. The group also includes two huge German shepherd dogs.

After landing the group the little fishing vessel, still without lights or radio, puts out into the open sea. The ship's captain is hoping to hide away in a neutral port in Ireland. If the vessel is stopped at sea by a British naval patrol the captain and his crew have nothing to fear: the dangerous passengers have left the fishing boat and all traces of their presence on it have already been removed.

'Shakespeare's' group lands on a tiny beach close to Little Haven. The landing place has been chosen long ago, and very well chosen: the beach is shut in on three sides by huge cliffs, so that even in daytime it is impossible to see from a distance what is going on on the beach itself.

At the same time as 'Shakespeare' four other *spetsnaz* groups are going ashore in different places two or three kilometres apart. Operating independently of each other, these four groups arrive by different routes at the little village of Brawdy and at 3.30 in the morning they make a simultaneous attack from different directions on a large building belonging to the United States Navy. According to reports received by the GRU, hundreds, and possibly thousands, of acoustic listening posts have been set up in the region of the Atlantic Ocean. The underwater cables from these posts come together at Brawdy where hundreds of American experts analyse with the aid of a computer a huge amount of information about the movement of submarines and surface ships all over the North Atlantic. According to the GRU's information similar establishments have been set up in Antigua in the Azores, in Hofn and Keflavik in

Iceland, in Hawaii and on Guam. The GRU's commanding officers are aware that their information about Brawdy may not be accurate. But the decision has been taken to attack and destroy the Brawdy monitoring station and all the others as well. The four attacking groups have been given the task of killing as many as possible of the technical staff of the station and of destroying as much as possible of the electronic apparatus, and everything that will burn must be burnt. Mines must be laid at the approaches to the building. All four groups can then depart in different directions.

The 'Shakespeare' group takes no part in the raid. Its task, beginning with the following night, is to lay the mines at the approaches to the building. Apart from that, with sniper fire and open attacks, the group has to make it difficult for anyone to attempt to save or restore the station. The group commander knows that the four neighbouring groups which are taking part in the attack are nearby and are doing the same. But the group commander does not know everything. He does not know that *spetsnaz* detachment 2-S-2, under the command of a major known as 'Uncle Kostya', has landed in the area of St David's. Detachment 2-S-2 consists of fifty-six men, fifteen lightweight motorcycles and six small cars with a considerable supply of ammunition. The detachment's task is to move rapidly, using secondary and forest roads and in some cases even the main roads, and reach the Forest of Dean to organise a base there. The Forest of Dean is a wonderful place for *spetsnaz* operations. It is a hilly area covered with dense forest. At one time it was an important industrial region. There are still the remains of the abandoned coal mines and quarries and railway tunnels, although it is a long time since there was any railway there. Once firmly established in that forest 'Uncle Kostya' can strike out in any direction: nearby there is a nuclear power station, the Severn bridge, a railway tunnel beneath the river Severn, the port of Bristol, the GCHQ government communications centre at Cheltenham, very important military factories also at Bristol and a huge munitions dump at Welford. The GRU believes that it is somewhere in this area that the Royal Family would be sent in the event of war, and that would be a very important target.

The four *spetsnaz* groups which have taken part at the outset in the operation against Brawdy depart immediately after the attack and make their different ways to the Forest of Dean where they can join up with Uncle Kostya's detachment. Shakespeare knows nothing about this. The large-scale raid on Brawdy and Shakespeare's continued activity in the following days and nights ought to give the enemy the impression that this is one of the main areas of operation for *spetsnaz*.

Meanwhile *spetsnaz* group 2-C-41, of twelve men, has been landed at night near the port of Felixstowe from the catamaran *Double Star*. The boat is sailing under the Spanish flag. The group has left the catamaran in the open sea and swum ashore in aqualungs. There it has been met by a *spetsnaz* agent recruited some years previously. He has at the GRU's expense bought a small motorcycle shop, and his shop has always had available at least fifteen Japanese motorcycles all ready for the road, along with several sets of leather jackets, trousers and crash helmets. The group (containing some of the best motorcyclists in the Soviet Union) changes its clothes, its weapons are wrapped in tarpaulin, the *spetsnaz* agent and his family are killed and their bodies hidden in the cellar of their house, and the motorcycle gang then rushes off at a great speed along the A45 in the direction of Mildenhall. Its task is to set up automatic Strela-Blok anti-aircraft missiles in the area of the base and knock out one of the most important American air bases in Europe, used regularly by F-111s. Afterwards the group is to make for the nearest forest and link up with *spetsnaz* detachment 2-C-5.

The group commander does not know that at the same time and not far away from him ten other *spetsnaz* groups, each working independently, are carrying out similar

operations against the American military bases at Woodbridge, Bentwaters and Lakenheath.

The motor yacht *Maria* was built in Italy. In the course of a decade she has changed owners several times and visited the oceans of the world until she was sold to some wealthy person, after which she has not been seen for several years in any port in the world. But when the international situation takes a turn for the worse the *Maria* appears in the North Sea sailing under a Swedish flag. After some modernisation the appearance of the yacht has changed somewhat. On receiving the signal `393939' the *Maria* travels at full speed towards the coast of Great Britain. When it is inside British territorial waters and within range of Fylingdales Moor the yacht's crew removes hatch covers to reveal two BM-23 Katusha-like multi-barrelled missile-launchers. The sailors quickly aim the weapon at the gigantic spheres and fire. Seventy-two heavy shells explode around the installation, causing irreparable harm to the early warning system. The sailors on the yacht put on their aqualungs and jump overboard. For two hours the yacht drifts close to the shore without a crew. When the police clamber aboard, she explodes and sinks.

For operations against NATO forces in Central Europe the Soviet high command has concentrated an immensely powerful collection of forces consisting of the 1st and 2nd Western Fronts in East Germany, the 3rd Western Front in Poland, the Central Front in Czechoslovakia and the Group of Tank Armies in Belorussia. This makes fifteen armies altogether, including the six tank armies. On the right flank of this collection of forces there is the combined Baltic Fleet. And deep in Soviet territory another five fronts are being built up (fifteen armies altogether) for supporting attack.

On 12 August at 2300 hours *spetsnaz* battalions drawn from the seven armies of the first echelon cross the frontier of Western Germany on motorised hang-gliders, ordinary gliders and gliding parachutes. Operating in small groups, each battalion strikes at the enemy's radar installations, concentrating its efforts on a relatively narrow sector so as to create a sort of corridor for its planes to fly through. Apart from these seven corridors, another one of strategic importance is created. It was for this purpose that back in July the 13th *spetsnaz* brigade arrived in East Germany from the Moscow military district on the pretext that it was a military construction unit and based itself in the Thuringer Wald. The brigade is now split into sixty groups scattered about the forests of the Spessart and Odenwald hills, and faced with the task of destroying the anti-aircraft installations, especially the radar systems. In the first wave there are altogether 130 *spetsnaz* groups dropped with a total of some 3300 troops.

Two hours after the men have been dropped, the Soviet air force carries out a mass night raid on the enemy's anti-aircraft installations. The combined blow struck by the air force and *spetsnaz* makes it possible to clear one large and several smaller corridors through the anti-aircraft defence system. These corridors are used immediately for another mass air attack and a second drop of *spetsnaz* units.

Simultaneously, advance detachments of the seven armies cross the frontier and advance westwards.

At 0330 hours on 13 August the second wave of *spetsnaz* forces is dropped from Aeroflot aircraft operating at very low heights with heavy fighter cover.

The Central Front drops its *spetsnaz* brigade in the heavily wooded mountains near Freiburg. The brigade's job is to destroy the important American, West German and French headquarters, lines of communication, aircraft on the ground and anti-aircraft defences. This brigade is, so to speak, opening the gates into France, into which will soon burst several fronts and a further wave of *spetsnaz*.

The 1st and 2nd Western Fronts drop their *spetsnaz* brigades in Germany to the west of the Rhine. This part of West Germany is the furthest away from the dangerous eastern neighbour and consequently all the most vulnerable targets are concentrated there: headquarters, command posts, aerodromes, nuclear weapon stores, colossal reserves of military equipment, ammunition and fuel.

The *spetsnaz* brigade of the 1st Western Front is dropped in the Aachen area. Here there are several large forests where bases can be organised and a number of very tempting targets: bridges across the Rhine which would be used for bringing up reserves and supplying the NATO forces fighting to the east of the Rhine, the important air bases of Bruggen and Wildenrath, the residence of the German government and West Germany's civil service in Bonn, important headquarters near München-Gladbach, and the Geilenkirchen air base where the E-3A early-warning aircraft are based. It is in this area that the Soviet high command plans to bring into the battle the 20th Guards Army, which is to strike southwards down the west bank of the Rhine. The *spetsnaz* brigade is busy clearing the way for the columns of tanks which are soon to appear here.

The *spetsnaz* brigade of the 2nd Western Front has been dropped in the Kaiserslautern area with the task of neutralising the important air base and the air force command posts near Ramstein and Zweibrücken and of destroying the nuclear weapons stores at Pirmasens. The place where the brigade has been dropped is where, according to the plan of the Soviet high command, the two arms of the gigantic pincer movement are to close together: the 20th Guards Army advancing from the north and the 8th Guards Tank Army striking from Czechoslovakia in the direction of Karlsruhe. After this the second strategic echelon will be brought into action to inflict a crushing defeat on France.

At the same time the Soviet high command understands that to win the war it has to prevent the large-scale transfer of American troops, arms and equipment to Western Europe. To solve the problem the huge Soviet Northern Fleet will have to be brought out into the Atlantic and be kept supplied there. The operations of the fleet will have to be backed up by the Air Force. But for the fleet to get out into the Atlantic it will have to pass through a long corridor between Norway and Greenland and Iceland. There the Soviet fleet will be exposed to constant observation and attack by air forces, small ships and submarines operating out of the fjords and by a huge collection of radio-electronic instruments and installations.

Norway, especially its southern part, is an exceptionally important area for the Soviet military leaders. They need to seize southern Norway and establish air and naval bases there in order to fight a battle for the Atlantic and therefore for Central Europe. The Soviet high command has allotted at least one entire front consisting of an airborne division, considerable naval forces and a brigade of *spetsnaz*. But airlifting ammunition, fuel, foodstuffs and reinforcements to the military, air and naval bases in Norway presents great problems of scale. So there have to be good and safe roads to the bases in southern Norway. Those roads lie in Sweden.

In the past Sweden was lucky: she always remained on the sidelines in a conflict. But at the end of the twentieth century the balance of the battlefield is changing. Sweden has become one of the most important strategic points in the world. If war breaks out the path of the aggressor will lie across Sweden. The occupation of Sweden is made easier by the fact that there are no nuclear weapons on its territory, so that

the Soviet leaders risk very little. They know, however, that the Swedish soldier is a very serious opponent — thoughtful, disciplined, physically strong and tough, well armed, well acquainted with the territory he will have to fight over, and well trained for action in such terrain. The experience of the war against Finland teaches that in Scandinavia frontal attacks with tanks do not produce brilliant results. It requires the use of special tactics and special troops: *spetsnaz*.

And so it goes on, all over the world. In Sweden the capital city is reduced to a state of panic by the murder of several senior government figures and arson and bombing attacks on key buildings and ordinary civilians. In Japan, American nuclear bases are destroyed and chemical weapons used on the seat of government. In Pakistan, a breakaway movement in Baluchistan province, instantly recognised by the Soviet Communist Party, asks for and receives direct military intervention from the USSR to protect its fragile independence: Soviet-controlled territory extends all the way from Siberia through Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean.

It may not even need a third world war for the Soviet Union to occupy Baluchistan. The Red Army may be withdrawing from Afghanistan, but knowing what we know about Soviet strategy and the uses to which *spetsnaz* can be put, such a withdrawal can be seen as a useful public relations exercise without hindering the work of *spetsnaz* in any way. With a *spetsnaz* presence in Baluchistan, the Politburo could be reaching very close to the main oil artery of the world, to the Arab countries, to Eastern and Southern Africa, to Australia and South-east Asia: territories and oceans that are practically undefended.

APPENDICES

Appendix A-D Skipped (diagrams)

Appendix E

The part the Soviet athletes play

Below are a number of examples of the very close relationship between the sporting and military achievements of Soviet athletes.

Vladimir Myagkov. In the Soviet ski championships in 1939 Myagkov put up an exceptionally good time over the 20-kilometre distance, and became Soviet champion at that distance. During the war he was called into the Army and put in charge of a small unit of athletes which came directly under the Intelligence directorate of the front. He was later killed in fighting behind enemy lines. He was the first of the top Soviet athletes to be made a Hero of the Soviet Union, in his case posthumously. The tasks that Myagkov's sports unit was carrying out, the circumstances of his death and the act for which he was made a Hero remain a Soviet state secret to this day.

Porfiri Polosukhin. A Red Army officer before the war, he held world records at parachute jumping. He had been an instructor training special troops for operations on enemy territory. During the war he continued to train parachutists for *spetsnaz* units of 'guard minelayers'. He was often behind the enemy's lines, and he developed a method of camouflaging airfields and of communicating with Soviet aircraft from secret partisan airfields. This original system operated until the end of the war and was never detected by the enemy, as a result of which connection by air with partisan units, especially with *spetsnaz* and *osnaz* units, was exceptionally reliable. After the

war many a soldier from special troops trained by Polosukhin became world and European parachute champions.

Dmitri Kositsyn. Before the war he headed the skating department in one of the State Institutes of Physical Culture. It was supposed to be a civilian institute, but the teachers and many of the students had military rank. Kositsyn was a captain and had some notable achievements to his credit in sport, having established a number of Soviet records. During the war he commanded a special unit known as 'Black Death'. From that 'civilian' institute, in the first week of war alone, thirteen such units were formed. They engaged in active terrorist work in support of the Red Army, and the speed with which the units were formed suggests that long before the war all the members of the units had been carefully screened and trained. Otherwise they would not have been sent behind the lines. Kositsyn's unit acquired a name as the most daring and ruthless of all the formations on the Leningrad front.

Makhmud Umarov. During the Second World War Umarov was a soldier in an independent *spetsnaz* mine-laying battalion. He was several times dropped with a group of men behind enemy lines. He had two professions: he was a crack shot, and a doctor. After the war he was an officer in the Intelligence directorate of the Leningrad military district. He continued to have two professions, and as a doctor-psychiatrist he received an honorary doctorate for theoretical work. As a crack shot he became European and world champion; in fact, he was five times European champion and three times world champion. He won two Olympic silver medals for pistol shooting, in Melbourne and in Rome. After the resurrection of *spetsnaz* he served as an officer in that organisation, where both his professions were valued. Thanks to his sporting activities Lieutenant-Colonel Umarov visited many countries of the world and had extensive connections. In 1961 Makhmud Umarov suddenly disappeared from the medical and sporting scenes. There is some reason to believe that he died in very strange circumstances.

Yuri Borisovich Chesnokov. A man of unusual physical strength and endurance, he took part in many kinds of sport. He was particularly successful at volleyball: twice world champion and Olympic champion. Chesnokov's physical qualities were noticed very early and as soon as he finished school he was taken into the Academy of Military Engineering, although he was not an officer. From that time he was closely involved in the theory and practice of using explosives. Apart from an Olympic gold medal he has another gold medal for his work on the technique of causing explosions. Chesnokov is now a *spetsnaz* colonel.

Valentin Yakovlevich Kudrevatykh. He joined the para-military DOSAAF organisation when he was still at school. He took up parachute jumping, gliding and rifle shooting at the same time. In May 1956 he made his first parachute jump. Two years later, at the age of eighteen, he had reached a high level at parachute jumping and shooting. In 1959 he was called into the army, serving in the airborne forces. In 1961 he set five world records in one week in parachute sport, for which he was promoted sergeant and sent to the airborne officers' school in Ryazan. After that he was sent to *spetsnaz* and put in command of some special women's units. He had under his command the most outstanding women athletes, including Antonina Kensitskaya, to whom he is now married. She has established thirteen world records, her husband fifteen. He made parachute jumps (often with a women's group) in the most incredible conditions, landing in the mountains, in forests, on the roofs of houses and so forth. Kudrevatykh took part in practically all the tests of new parachute equipment and weapons. Along with a group of professional women parachutists he took part in the experimental group drop from a critically low height on 1 March 1968. Then, as he was completing his 5,555th jump, he got into a critical situation. Black humour among Soviet airborne troops says that, if neither the main nor the reserve parachute opens,

the parachutist still has a whole twenty seconds to learn to fly. Kudrevatykh did not learn to fly in those last seconds, but he managed with his body and the unopened parachutes to slow his fall. He spent more than two years in hospital and went through more than ten operations. When he was discharged he made his 5,556th jump. Many Soviet military papers published pictures of that jump. As usual Kudrevatykh jumped in the company of professional women parachutists. But there are no women in the Soviet airborne divisions. Only in *spetsnaz*.

After making that jump Kudrevatykh was promoted full colonel.

Appendix F

The Spetsnaz Intelligence Point (RP-SN)

Imagine that you have graduated from the 3rd faculty (operational intelligence) of the Military-Diplomatic Academy of the General Staff. If you have passed out successfully you will be sent to one of the twenty Intelligence directorates (RUs), which are to be found in the headquarters of military districts, groups of forces and fleets.

On the first day I spent at the Military-Diplomatic Academy I realised that diplomacy is espionage and that military diplomacy is military espionage. Successful completion of the 3rd faculty of the Military-Diplomatic Academy means serving in one of the Intelligence directorates, or in subordinate units directly connected with the recruitment of foreign agents and managing them.

Imagine you have been posted to the Intelligence Directorate of the Kiev military district. Kiev is without doubt the most beautiful city in the Soviet Union, and I have heard it said more than once by Western journalists who have visited Kiev that it is the most beautiful city in the world.

So you are now in the enormous building housing the headquarters of the Kiev military district. At different times all the outstanding military leaders of the Soviet Union have worked in this magnificent building: Zhukov, Bagramyan, Vatutin, Koshevoi, Chuikov, Kulikov, Yakubovsky and many others. The office of the officer commanding the district is on the second floor. To the right of his office are the massive doors to the Operational Directorate. To the left are the no less massive doors to the Intelligence Directorate. It is a symbolic placing: the first directorate (battle planning) is the commanding officer's right hand, while the second directorate (*razvedka*) is his left. There are many other directorates and departments in the headquarters, but they are all on other floors.

Your first visit to the Intelligence Directorate at the district headquarters takes place, of course, in the company of one of the officers. Otherwise you would simply not be admitted.

Before entering the headquarters you must call at the permit office and produce your authority. You are given a number to phone and an officer comes to escort you. The permit office examines your documents very carefully and issues you with a temporary pass. The officer then leads you along endless corridors and up numerous stairs. You must be ready at every turn to produce your permit and officer's identity card. Your documents are checked many times before you reach the district's head of *razvedka*.

Now you are in the general's huge office. Facing you is a major-general, the head of *razvedka* for the Kiev military district. You introduce yourself to him: 'Comrade general, Captain so-and-so reporting for further duty.'

The general asks you a few questions, and as he talks with you about trivialities he decides your fate. There are a number of possibilities. Perhaps he doesn't take to you

and so decides not to take you on. You will be posted to the district Personnel Directorate and will never again have anything to do with Intelligence work. Or he may like you but not very much. In that case he will send you for reconnaissance work on lower floors to serve in a division or regiment. You will be working *inrazvedka*, but not with the agent network.

If you really please him several paths will be open to you. The *razvedka* of a military district is a gigantic organisation with a great deal of work to do. Firstly, he can post you to the headquarters of one of three armies to work in the headquarters Intelligence department, where you will be sent on to an intelligence post (RP) to recruit secret agent-informers to work for that army.

Secondly, he can leave you in the Intelligence directorate for work in the second (agent network) or the third (*spetsnaz*) department. Thirdly, he can post you to one of the places where the recruitment of foreigners to work for the Kiev military district is actually taking place. There are two such places: the Intelligence centre (RZs) and the *spetsnaz* Intelligence point (RP *spetsnaz*).

The general may ask you for your own opinion. Your reply must be short: for example — I don't mind where I work, so long as it is not at headquarters, preferably at recruitment. The general expects that sort of reply from you. Intelligence has no need of an officer who is not bursting to do recruiting work. If someone has got into Intelligence work but is not burning with desire to recruit foreigners, it means he has made a mistake in his choice of profession. It also means that the people who recommended him for Intelligence work and spent years training him at the Military-Diplomatic Academy were also mistaken.

The general asks his final question: what kind of agents do you want to recruit — for providing information or for collaborating with *spetsnaz*? Every intelligence officer at the front and fleet level must know how to recruit agents of both kinds. It is, you say, all the same to you.

'All right,' the general says, 'I am appointing you an officer in the *spetsnaz* Intelligence point of the 3rd department of the Second Directorate of the headquarters of the Kiev military district. The order will be issued in writing tomorrow. I wish you well.'

You thank the general for the trust placed in you, salute smartly, click your heels, and leave the office. The escorting officer awaits you at the exit. From here, without any permits, you come out into a little courtyard, where there is always a little prison van waiting. The door slams behind you and you are in a mousetrap. Facing you is a little opaque window with a strong grille over it. No use trying to look out. The van twists and turns round the city's streets, often stopping and changing direction, and you realise that it is stopping at traffic lights. At last the van drives through some huge gates and comes to a halt. The door is opened and you step out into the courtyard of the penal battalion of the Kiev military district. It is a military prison. Welcome to your new place of work.

The ancient city of Kiev has seen conquerors from all over the world pass down its streets. Some of them razed the city to the ground; others fortified it; then a third lot destroyed it again. The fortifications around the ruined and burnt-out city of Kiev were built for the last time in 1943 on Hitler's orders. On the approaches to Kiev you can come across fortifications of all ages, from the concrete pillboxes of the twentieth century to the ruins of walls that were built five hundred years before the arrival of Batu Khan.

The place you have been brought to is a fort built at the time of Catherine the Great. It is built on the south-west approaches to the city at the top of steep cliffs covered with ancient oaks. Alongside are other forts, an enormous ancient monastery, and an ancient fortress which now houses a military hospital.

Through the centuries military installations of the most varied kinds — stores, barracks, headquarters — have been built on the most dangerous approaches to the city and, apart from the basic purpose, they have also served as fortifications. The fort we have come to also served two purposes: as a barracks for 500 to 700 soldiers, and as a fort. Circular in shape, its outside walls used to have only narrow slits and broad embrasures for guns. These have now all been filled in and the only remaining windows are those that look into the internal courtyard. The fort has only one gateway, a well-defended tunnel through the mighty walls. A brick wall has been added around the fort. From the outside it looks like a high brick wall in a narrow lane, with yet another brick wall, higher than the first one, behind it.

Both the inner and outer courtyards of the fort are split up into numerous sectors and little yards divided by smaller walls and a whole jungle of barbed wire. The sectors have their own strange labels: the numbering has been so devised that no one should be able to discern any logic in it. The absence of any system facilitates the secrecy surrounding the establishment.

There are three companies of men undergoing punishment and one guard company in the penal battalion. The men in the guard company have only a very vague idea of who visits the battalion and why. They have only their instructions which have to be carried out: the men undergoing punishment can be only in the inner courtyard in certain sectors; officers who have a triangle stamped in their passes are allowed into certain other sectors; officers with a little star stamped in their passes are allowed to enter other sectors; and so forth.

Apart from the officers of the penal battalion, frequent callers at the fort are officers of the military prosecutor's office, the military commandant of the city, and officers of the commandant's office: investigators, lawyers. And there is a sector set aside for you. The *spetsnaz* intelligence point has no connection at all with the penal battalion. But if it were to be situated separately in some building, sooner or later people in the vicinity would be struck by the suspicious behaviour of the people occupying the building. Here in the penal battalion you are hidden from curious eyes.

The *spetsnaz* intelligence point is a small military unit headed by a lieutenant-colonel, who has under him a number of officers, graduates from the Military-Diplomatic Academy, and a few sergeants and privates who carry out support functions without having any idea (or the correct idea) of what the officers are engaged on. Officers of the penal battalion and those visiting the battalion are not supposed to ask what goes on in your sector. Many years back one of your predecessors appeared to allow himself the luxury of 'careless talk', to the effect that his was a group reporting directly to the officer commanding the district and investigating cases of corruption among the senior officers. This is sufficient to ensure that you are treated with respect and not asked any more questions.

Its location in the penal battalion gives the *spetsnaz* point a lot of advantages: behind such enormous walls, the command can be sure that your documents will not get burnt or lost by accident; it is under the strictest guard, with dozens of guard dogs and machine-guns mounted in towers to preserve your peace of mind; no outsider interested in what is going on inside the walls will ever get a straight answer; the independent organisation does not attract the attention of higher-ranking Soviet military leaders who are not supposed to know about GRU and *spetsnaz*; and even if an outsider knows something about you he cannot distinguish *spetsnaz* officers from among the other officers visiting the old fort.

Spetsnaz has at its disposal a number of prison vans exactly the same as those belonging to the penal battalion and with similar numbers. They are very convenient for bringing any person of interest to us into or out of your fort at any time. What is good about the prison van is that neither the visitor nor outsiders can work out exactly where the *spetsnaz* point is. A visitor can be invited to any well guarded place where there are usually plenty of people (the headquarters, commandant's office, police station) and then secretly brought in a closed van to the old fort, and returned in the same way so that he gets lost in the crowd. Fortunately there are several such forts in the district.

A penal battalion, that is to say a military prison, is a favourite place for the GRU to hide its branches in. There are other kinds of camouflage as well — design bureaux, missiles bases, signals centres — but they all have one feature in common: a small, secret organisation is concealed within a large, carefully guarded military establishment.

In addition to its main premises where the safes crammed with secret papers are kept, the *spetsnaz* Intelligence point has several secret apartments and small houses on the outskirts of the city.

Having found yourself in the place I have described, you are met by an unhappy-looking lieutenant-colonel who has probably spent his whole working life at this work. He gives you a brief order: 'You wear uniform only inside the fort and if you are called to the district headquarters. The rest of the time you wear civilian clothes.'

'I understand, comrade lieutenant-colonel.'

'But there's nothing for you to do here in the fort and even less in the headquarters. This is my place, not yours. I don't need any bureaucrats; I need hunters. Go off and come back in a month's time with material on a good foreign catch.'

'Very well.'

'Do you know the territories our district will be fighting on in a war?'

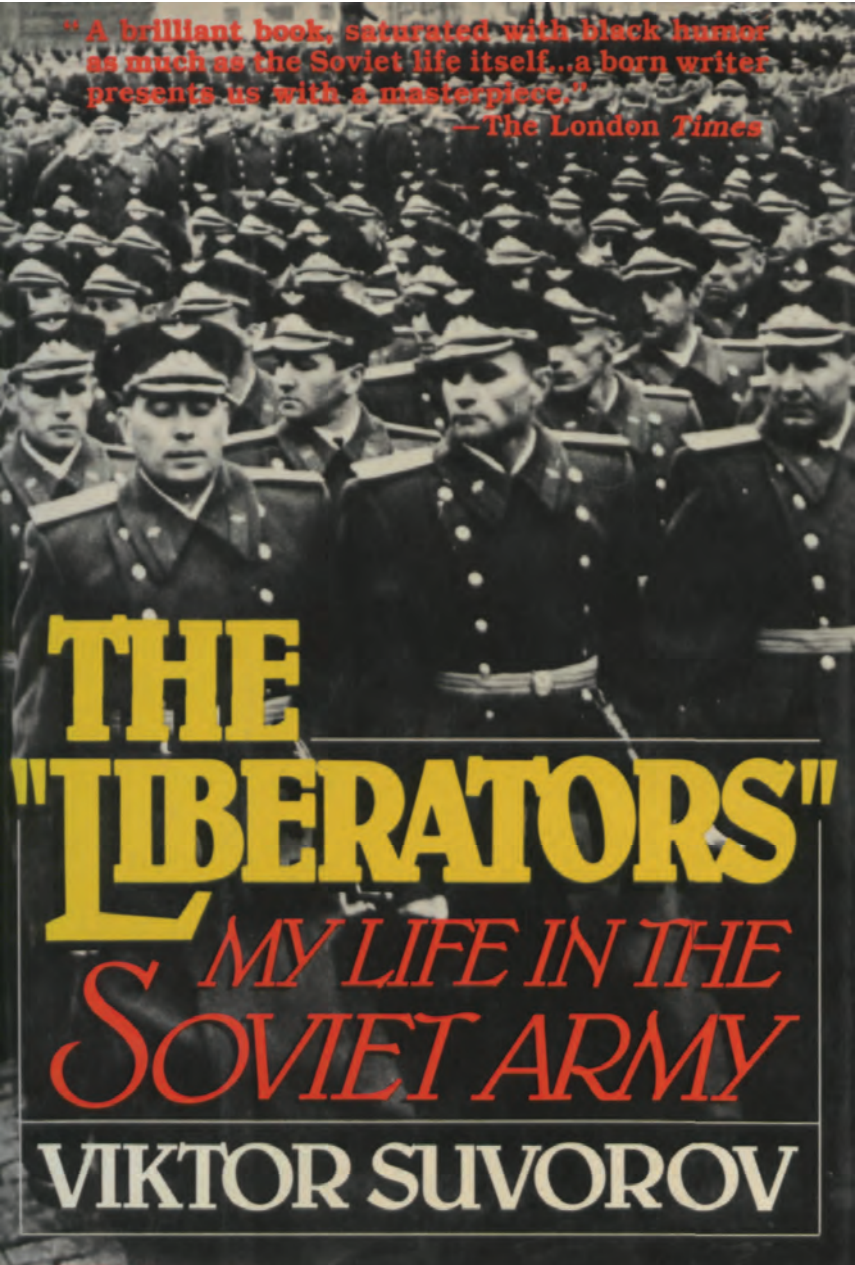
'Yes, I do.'

'Well, I need another agent there who could meet up with a *spetsnaz* group in any circumstances. I am giving you a month because you are just beginning your service, but the time-scale will be stricter later on. Off you go, and remember that you have got a lot of rivals in Kiev: the friends of yours who have already joined the Intelligence point are probably active in the city, the KGB is also busy, and goodness knows who else is recruiting here. And remember — you can slip up only once in our business. I shall never overlook a mistake, and neither will *spetsnaz*. In wartime you are shot for making a mistake. In peacetime you land in prison. You know which prison?'

That was what Kiev was like before the Chernobyl disaster. For hundreds of years barbarians from many of the countries of Asia and Europe had been doing their best to destroy my great city, but nobody inflicted such damage on it as did the Communists. The history of nuclear energy in the Soviet Union is one — very long — story of crime. The founding father of the development of nuclear energy was Lavrenti Beria, the all-powerful chief of the secret police and, as later became apparent, one of the greatest criminals of the twentieth century. The majority of the Soviet ministers, designers and engineers connected with the development of nuclear energy were kept in prisons, and not only in Stalin's time. All nuclear plants are built with prison labour. I have personally seen thousands of convicts working in the uranium mines in the Kirovograd region. (See V. Suvorov, *Aquarium*). The convicts have no incentive whatsoever to turn out good quality work.

Sooner or later this was bound to end in disaster. The paper *Literaturnaya Ukraina*¹ reported on the criminal attitude to construction work and the use of defective materials and obsolete technology at Chernobyl. The paper issued a warning that several generations of people would have to pay for the irresponsible attitude of the people in charge of the building work. But nobody paid any attention to this article or others like it; a month later the catastrophe took place.

¹ 27 March 1986.



**"A brilliant book, saturated with black humor
as much as the Soviet life itself...a born writer
presents us with a masterpiece."**

—The London Times

THE "LIBERATORS"

*MY LIFE IN THE
SOVIET ARMY*

VIKTOR SUVOROV

...maddeningly senseless drill, stupefying political indoctrination, enormous corruption... What happened with the once glorious Red Army, the pride of 'right'-minded people, is the best indicator of the decay of the communist system itself....A brilliant book, saturated with black humor as much as the Soviet life itself... a born writer presents us with a master piece."—Vladimir Bukovsky, *The Times* (London)

"A unique and invaluable view of the Soviet army from the inside: the insanely rigid and brutal discipline (Russian troops loot and rape only when permitted to do so by their commanders), the clumsiness, the wastefulness, the sycophancy and venality of so many junior officers and the vulgar and drunken extravagance of much of the top brass... [told] in a most readable manner through a series of scenes drawn from life, adding up to a savage and also hilariously funny exposure of the failures of a military machine which we, meekly accepting the teaching of experts who should know better, have come to regard with entirely misplaced (and rather shameful) awe... Read Mr Suvorov both for fun and salutary instruction." —Edward Crankshaw, *The Observer*

"Here a Soviet officer gives us an unvarnished picture of the adversary's troops. The book is brief, comic, and authentic.... It does throw startling light on the degradation of Soviet soldiers, often treated as no better than uniformed serfs."

—Nora Beloff, *The Daily Telegraph*

Here is a sardonic and highly personal document by the author of the definitive study of the Red Army, *Inside the Soviet Army*, published earlier in the year. Suvorov is the pseudonym of an officer in the post-Khrushchev Soviet army who defected recently to England.

No previous book by a Russian has revealed with such clarity and honesty what life is like now in the Soviet army. Suvorov takes the reader through the mind-freezing savagery of a penal glass-house and the extravagant idiocy of army maneuvers on the grandest scale. He shows how an officer is trained, and how the hierarchy of the Soviet army is achieved and maintained. He gives brutally frank portraits of the senior commanders and politicians, and of the petty bureaucrats and Party informers. There is much satiric humor in his vivid narrative, which includes his experiences not only in training and garrison but in action, such as the infamous crushing of the Czech uprising.

Suvorov tells his story with simplicity but also with deadly accuracy. He knows what it was like, and he knows that it could happen again. It was his army that could invade Poland, or Germany, or....It is officers of his kind and with his training who could be involved in the next war. Entertaining, often crude in its impact, and— ultimately—deeply disturbing, this is a book of importance to our times.

THE LIBERATORS
My Life in the Soviet Army

VIKTOR SUVOROV

There is on earth no sadder ditty Than the tale of the Central Committee!
—Russian Folk Song

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Preface

How I Became a Liberator

The Party is our helmsman - Popular song

The General Secretary of the Party set a task: there must be a sharp rise in agricultural output. So the whole country reflected on how best to achieve this magnificent aim. The Secretary of our Regional Party Committee thought about it, as did all his advisers, consultants and researchers.

To tell the truth, it was a ridiculously easy task: the climate of our Region is similar to that of France - there is plenty of sun and warmth and water. And our soil is splendid. The black earth is nearly a metre thick and rich enough to spread on a slice of bread. There are also plenty of technicians and specialists. The only misfortune is that the people themselves have no interest in work because, however much a peasant works, the reward for him, personally, will be just the same, since to pay for a peasant's labour according to results is, of course, quite impossible. Just imagine what would happen! Your hard-working peasant would soon be rich while layabouts would remain beggars. A rift would appear and then inequality would creep in. And all this would be contrary to the ideals of socialism.

So the First Secretary of the Regional Party Committee and all his advisers gave much thought as to how to increase agricultural output without infringing the principle of common material equality. And at last it dawned on them what to do. They could achieve the desired increase by using fertilizers.

A vast meeting, thousands strong, complete with brass bands, speeches, placards and banners, was urgently called at the local Chemical Combine. To a man, they shouted slogans, applauded, chanted patriotic songs. After that meeting, a competitive economy drive was launched at the Chemical Combine to harvest raw materials and energy resources. It lasted throughout the winter and, in the spring, on Lenin's birthday, all the workers reported at the Combine and laboured all day, without wages, using up the raw materials which had been saved. During the course of this day, they produced several thousand tons of liquid nitrogen fertilizer and, in accordance with the meeting's resolution, they decided to hand over all this fertilizer, free of charge, to the Region's collective farms.

It was a real red letter day for labour, and not only the newspaper correspondents of the local and republican press but also those of the central newspapers came in person to the Combine. In the evening, both the All-Union radio and the Central Television programmes reported this remarkable feat. The Central Committee of the Party officially commended the initiative of our chemical workers and appealed to all Chemical Combines, throughout the country, to launch competitions aimed at economising on raw materials which would later be used to produce additional amounts of fertilizer, to be handed over, in turn, free of charge, to neighbouring collective farms. Let our country bloom! Let it blossom forth like a vernal garden!

When the labour fete-day ended, the labour daily grind began.

The next morning, the Director of the Chemical Combine telephoned to the Regional Committee and said that, if the collective farms did not, during the next twenty-four hours, collect the free fertilizer presented to them, the Chemical Combine would come to a standstill: all its tanks were full to overflowing with excess fertilizer production and there was nowhere to put current production.

There followed a series of insistent calls from the Regional Committee to all the small District Committees, and from them to all collective farms. Each of the fifty regional collectives had immediately to take away the 150 tons of the fertilizer presented by the Combine. The news that our own collective had been given such an amount of fertilizer free of charge did not please our Chairman. Our collective farm owned seventeen lorries, but only three of these had tanks. One was used for milk, another for water, the third for petrol. Those used for milk and water could not possibly be used for liquid fertilizer. There remained only the one used for petrol. The lorry was old and battered beyond recall. The capacity of its tank was one and a half tons of liquid. The distance from our collective farm to town was seventy-three kilometres; taking into consideration the state of our road, that meant five hours there and five hours back. I was the driver of this lorry.

'Now look here,' said the Chairman, 'if you do not sleep for twenty-four hours, if your battery does not pack up, if your radiator does not melt with the heat, if your gear-box does not jam, if your lorry does not get stuck in the mud, you can do two trips in twenty-four hours, and bring back three tons of this bloody fertilizer. But you have to do, not two, but a hundred trips!'

'Right,' I said.

'That is not all,' he said. 'We are short of petrol. Of course I will give you petrol for three trips but, for the remaining ninety-seven, do the best you can. Push your lorry with your arse if you have to!'

'Right,' I said.

'You are our only hope. If you cannot do a hundred trips, you know only too well I will be dismissed from the chairmanship.'

I knew it. I knew also that, although our chairman was not to everyone's liking, nevertheless his replacement was a bloody sight worse.

'Any questions?'

'Yes. Even if I do a hundred trips - without petrol - where shall I put all this fertilizer?'

The Chairman glanced anxiously round the broad farmyard and scratched the back of his head. Where indeed? 150 tons of liquid, poisonous, stinking matter? Lenin's birthday is in April, worse luck, but the fertilizer only goes on the soil in June. So where to keep the fertilizer until June?

'Look here,' he said. 'Don't start nattering on about it. Get yourself to town as soon as possible. All the region's farms are busy with the same problem. Somebody may have some bright idea. You just watch what the others do and then you do the same. Get a move on! And don't return unless you've succeeded.'

I sighed, spat on my palms like a boxer before a fight, then got into my wretched lorry and set off to town over the bumps, pot-holes and huge puddles, which the spring sun had not yet dried up.

There was a long queue of trucks of different makes, dimensions and colours standing outside the Chemical Combine. But the queue was moving fast. I soon discovered that lorries, which had only a moment before been loaded, were already returning and taking up new places in the queue. Every one of these lorries ostensibly needed many hours to deliver its valuable load to its destination and then to return. But they rejoined the queue in a matter of minutes. Then came my turn. My tanks were rapidly filled with the foul-smelling liquid and the man in charge marked down on his list that my native kolkhoz had just received the first one and a half tons of fertilizer. I drove my lorry out through the Combine's gates and followed the group of lorries which had loaded up before mine. All of them, as if at a word of command, turned off the road and descended a steep slope towards the bank of the river Dnieper. I did the same. In no time at all, they had emptied their tanks. I did the same. Over the smooth surface of the great river, the cradle of the Russian civilisation, slowly spread a huge poisonous, yellow, stinking stain.

Having emptied my tank, I headed again for the Combine and another one and a half tons of fertilizer were marked off for our kolkhoz. And so it went on. The work proceeded vigorously and noisily. Tens of lorries, hundreds of trips, thousands of tons! Never in my life have I seen so many fish. And I would never have believed that

there were so many fish in the Dnieper. The whole surface of the river, from one side to the other, was crammed with the dead bodies of pike, bream and other fish. And still the lorries came, in a never-ending stream. And every driver knew that, if we did not succeed in emptying the gigantic reservoirs of that huge Combine, it would grind to a halt -and this would be a crime for which our unfortunate Chairman would have to bear responsibility.

The militia appeared suddenly at noon. The whole region was cordoned off: we were all detained. The representatives from the Combine also appeared, and then a young adviser from the Regional Committee turned up in a black Volga car. With an expression of disgust, he examined the place of work. He put a small white handkerchief to his little nose: the stench was unbearable. After a short chat with the Combine's representatives and with one of the detailed drivers, he got back into his car and drove off. After him disappeared both the militia and the Combine's representatives. We were ordered to proceed. Clearly, having acquainted himself with the situation on the ground and understanding all the implications, the adviser found our solution the best one.

And what other kind of solution could possibly be found? Donate all this excess production to the State? But where would the State find the reservoirs to store such a huge amount of liquid? The kolkhozes had nowhere to store it and nothing to transport it in. Should it be recorded as the work quota? But, in that case, what to do with the still unprocessed raw material arriving at the Combine in an endless stream? If this production was taken as part of the work quota, the inspectors would of course sense that something was wrong and ask where so much excess production had come from. There would be investigations etcetera. So it was better to let things go on as they were.

Towards evening, we finished the job. Everyone took delivery of his final load of liquid, but this time no one carried it off to the river, but instead to his own kolkhoz. It was then relayed to Moscow that everything was going well and that this year's harvest would be a record, thanks to the Regional Committee's First Secretary. Moscow promptly replied with a congratulatory telegram to the First Secretary and to all workers of the Region. And that was that.

Late that night, I delivered one and a half tons of the fertilizer to the kolkhoz and reported to the Chairman that I had fulfilled the task ahead of time. He thanked me but did not go into detail. Everything had been clear to him from the very beginning. He had long been accustomed to the fact that, whenever the Communist Party issues instructions, these invariably end in a way no one wishes to remember.

"Where shall I put this one and a half tons?" I asked.

'Keep them yourself! If necessary, I could produce record harvests without fertilizers. But what's the point?'

And that was that. I poured the liquid over my own tiny private plot. It proved an unpardonable mistake. Apparently, there was too much fertilizer for my tiny area of ground and I applied it at the wrong time. In May, when all the neighbouring kitchen gardens were producing strong shoots mine was barren. I was horrified. What would I eat during the winter? I was not going to become a soldier until the following spring: so how was I to live until then? The money I would receive for my work at the kolkhoz would be hardly enough for two months of very frugal existence. The peasant's only hope is his private plot which is not much bigger than the palm of his hand. And if nothing grows on that - what then?

I had to make some urgent decisions. But what? I could not run away from the kolkhoz: under socialism a peasant has no right to a passport, although everybody else has an internal passport. As a result of this simple restriction, a peasant cannot live in a town, cannot marry a town girl or stay in a hotel. Travelling on a plane is also forbidden. Who will let you board an aircraft without a passport? Maybe you are a criminal?

Don't think it is just a Soviet communist caprice, either. It is a vital necessity. If you are trying to establish material equality among the inhabitants of any country, you must introduce similar measures against the peasants. If you make all people equal, there will be mass migration of peasants into towns, where the working day is limited, where one need not work on rest days and holidays, and where one can have a holiday in summer. But, if all the peasants go to live in towns, your state of universal equality will perish from hunger. And, in order to prevent that state of affairs, you will be obliged to revert to the free market system, that is to capitalism, or else keep the peasants in their villages by force, by barbed wire, guard-dogs, threats and the introduction of special anti-peasant legislation.

I was a convinced supporter of the material equality of all mankind and therefore was prepared to spend all my life without an internal passport, which means never flying in an aircraft, never staying at an hotel and never marrying a town girl. But, in compensation, we would have equality. There would be no exploitation of man by man and we would have no rich and no poor!

That bloody fertilizer which ruined my harvest also ruined all my plans and forced me to look for some new way of life. The choice was not great: I could land up in jail, where the food is free, or I could become an officer, where the food is also free. Taking into consideration the fact that it is not difficult to land in jail, I decided to exploit this possibility only if I did not succeed in becoming an officer. And that didn't turn out to be particularly simple!

In order to become an officer, I had to become a citizen of my country, in other words somehow or other obtain a passport. They say that, in the USSR, the acquisition of a passport for going abroad is so difficult that it sometimes takes a man's whole life to achieve. But, for anyone not entitled to receive one, to obtain an internal passport is an altogether more difficult task. If you have an internal passport and are trying to obtain one allowing you to go abroad, theoretically the law is on your side. You can protest, go on hunger-strike or write letters to Brezhnev. In the end, if you persist, you may well be successful. But how to obtain an internal passport if you are not entitled to one by law? If you are just a Soviet peasant and if the law is against you and if you live in a country but are not considered a citizen of that country but only its peasant? If you have no right to any form of defence? If you are born simply to work, simply as an integral part of the agricultural work force, then what do you do? What can one do if one does not represent a legal entity, just like for instance, a horse or a pig, which also has no right to an internal passport (let alone one for going abroad) and which is similarly forbidden to stay in hotels or to travel by air?

To all intents I, like any other Soviet peasant, was an outlaw. And yet, in spite of everything, I managed to get a passport. It is a very long story indeed which I take no pleasure in recalling. I had to blackmail the kolkhoz Chairman, deceive the Chairman of the village Soviet, bribe a village Soviet Secretary as well as an employee of the Military Commissariat: there was no other way.

And, after all that, my passport was still not quite legal. At any moment, it could have been proved that, even though I had been born in the USSR of Soviet parents, whose ancestors down several hundred years had never crossed any frontier or had any contact whatsoever with foreigners, I had illegally appropriated the name of a USSR citizen. So, as a matter of urgency, I had to change my half-legal passport for another officially-issued document in my name. And, to achieve that, I entered the Kharkov Guards Tank Command School. They took my passport and I was given a new red 'military Card' in its place. Now nobody on earth could send me back to the kolkhoz. There is no way back from the Soviet Army.

While still a trainee, I participated in some of the biggest ever training exercises by Soviet troops on Soviet Army training grounds, each of which could accommodate on its territory several completely sovereign states. So, I had the opportunity of seeing from the inside the life of the most famous Soviet divisions, such as the 120th Guards Rogachevsky Motor-Rifle Division, the 2nd Guards Taman and the 41st Guards Berlin Division. Even at that time, I was staggered by the fact

that each one of them was living a double life: one for show to the outside world, while the other inner reality was something quite apart and completely different.

In 1967 I was to become an officer. I served in the 287th Novograd-Volynsk Training Motor-Rifle Division of the Kiev Military District. At the time of the events in Czechoslovakia, I commanded a motor-rifle company of the 24th Samaro-Ulyanovsk Iron Motor-Rifle Division. Later I served on the Staff of the Leningrad Military District, and in diversionary troops, and after graduating from the Military Academy I served on the 10th Chief Directorate of the General Staff.

During my Staff service, I took part in many important training exercises like, for instance, that of the 3rd Shock Army of the Group of Soviet Troops in Germany.

The story related in this book starts from the moment when, while still a trainee at the Kharkov Guards School, I arrived in Kiev together with a group of my comrades to hand over battle equipment to the Kiev Tank Technical School. The hand-over dragged on for several days and, in order to save us from boredom, they entertained us with various studies and with service at the control check-points and other control points.

After a sleepless night, each member of a control check-point team was allowed to sleep, without undressing, in the small room beside the control point. When the story starts, I was asleep.

Part One

The Glasshouse

'Soldier! Boy!'

'Well?'

'What do you mean, well? Fucking well get up, I tell you, we're all on a charge!'

Shielding myself from the blinding sun with my arm, I tried to postpone the moment of awakening.

'I was on guard duty all night so even under regulations I am entitled to sleep three hours

'All you're entitled to is your cock in your pocket! Get up, I tell you, we're all on a charge.'

The news of our arrest made no impression on me at all. The only thing I realised clearly was that a good one and a half hours' compensation for a sleepless night was lost beyond recall. I sat up on the hard bench and rubbed my forehead and eyes with my fist. My head was cracking from lack of sleep. I yawned, stretched until my joints creaked, then sighed deeply to disperse any remaining sleep, and twisted my head about a bit in order to relieve a stiff neck.

'How much did we get?'

'Five for you - you were lucky, Viktor. But Sashka and I've been clobbered with ten days each while Vitya, the sergeant, got all of fifteen!'

What a bloody life our poor old sergeants have at Military School! You are paid five roubles extra for the job but they take twenty-five roubles' worth away from you.

'Where's my automatic?' I exclaimed.

'Everything's back at Company HQ - automatics, cartridge belts and bayonets. The Sergeant-Major will bring the equipment and food vouchers in a few moments, and then a bath, a haircut and off we go.'

In the main room of the Pass Check Point, the officer cadets of the first course, who had been precipitately removed from their usual occupations, were being handed documents and were counting the instruction files. Their sergeant was a very understanding fellow and was listening to us in a businesslike way, and nodding his head concernedly.

'I never took my eyes off him, and shouted the command as loudly as I could, and my lads opened the gate at once and, like lions, they devoured him with their eyes. And there you are: I didn't do a bloody thing and he clobbered me with fifteen, and my lads got ten each.'

'Okay, Kolya, never mind, get on with it!'

The other lads from the guard came in after us and, under their escorts, we all went for a haircut and a cold bath.

The cleanliness in the 'Reception Room' of the Kiev Garrison glasshouse was blinding.

'Comrade First Lieutenant, Guards Officer Cadet Suvorov presents himself at the Garrison Prison to serve his sentence.'

'How many?'

'Five days' arrest.'

'What for?'

'Bugger it,' flashed through my mind, 'What was it really for anyway? Why was I on a charge?'

The First Lieutenant, who had an unusually broad face and tiny feet, drilled into me with his small leaden eyes.

'What for?' he asked again.

'I don't know.'

'Who arrested you?'

'I don't know.'

'You'll soon find out here,' the First Lieutenant promised.

'Next.'

In came my sergeant.

'Comrade First Lieutenant, Guards Sergeant Makeyev for . . .'

'How many?' ugly mug cut in.

'Fifteen days.'

'Who sentenced you?'

'The Deputy Commander of the Military District, Colonel General Chizh.'

'What for?'

'We are guarding the School Check Point.'

'Ah-hah,' the First Lieutenant smiled understandingly.

He, of course, knew - indeed all three armies of the district knew - this habit of Colonel General Chizh, invariably to arrest the guard on duty at the Pass Check Point. It was an established fact that he arrested only those guarding the Check Point, but he did it without fail, on every visit to any school, regiment, battalion, division, at any training ground, firing range or depot. He did it anywhere and everywhere. Whenever he was passing through the Check Point, he arrested all those on duty and he meted out standard punishments. Fifteen days to

the head of the party, ten days to those actually on duty, and five days to those resting and awaiting their turn on duty. It had been going on for many years. All three armies and many separate units, sub-units, military establishments and other organisations, all suspected that the Deputy Commander was striving to establish for himself some special kind of reception ceremony, not provided for under regulations, but what exactly he really wanted no one could actually guess throughout all the years that he held this high office.

Two savage-looking lance-corporals appeared on the threshold of the 'Reception Room' and the reception had officially begun.

Ten seconds . . . UNDRESS!

Boots, belts, caps, coats, everything was instantly thrown on to the floor. Now, stark naked, we all stood in front of ugly mug.

'About turn! Bend forward! Open up!'

At this point a First Lieutenant of the Soviet Army examined our arses. Smoking in the glasshouse is forbidden, so sometimes heavy smokers try to smuggle in little pieces of cigarettes, by wrapping them in paper and pushing them into their anal passages. This trick is well known to the glasshouse authorities and is dealt with mercilessly.

Meanwhile, the savage-looking lance-corporals had been carrying out a brief but thorough examination of our clothes and boots which were lying on the floor.

Fifteen seconds . . . GET DRESSED!

If you are arrested not in town, but in a unit or while at a military school, and if you are well prepared and have your food vouchers ready and have had a bath, try to find an extra five minutes to change your boots for larger ones. Anyone who knows what is in store for you will willingly give you his. Wearing your smaller size, he will suffer no less than you, but he will wait patiently for your return. Large-size boots spell salvation in the glasshouse. If your boots are difficult to put on, then the few seconds given you for 'Get Dressed' or 'Undress', would not be long enough and five days on a charge could easily become ten or even fifteen.

'Documents on the table!'

'Lance-Corporal, collect all the belts!'

While in the glasshouse, no inmate is allowed a belt, in case he tries to commit suicide. The history of the Kiev glasshouse does, however, know of one enterprising and inventive chap who, while in solitary confinement, with nothing but a stool screwed to the floor, still managed, by tearing away the lower hem of his shirt, to make for himself a short, thin, but very strong rope. All this was achieved with the utmost caution, under the almost constant supervision of the escort sentries who, day and night, patrol corridors. After having made a

small loop, the end of which he tied to the stool's leg, he rolled on the floor, tightening the loop, for about ten long minutes. In the end, and in spite of every obstacle, he just managed to strangle himself.

'Money . . . watches?'

'No.'

One never takes such valuables to the glasshouse, as they will be taken away and old and broken ones will be returned in their place. And there is nowhere to go to protest!

'Flashes and badges?'

'And what are you bloody well doing with Guards badges? Do you think you're going to a carnival?'

'Comrade First Lieutenant, we are officer cadets of the Kharkov Guards Tank High Command School.'

'But what the hell are you doing lolling about in Kiev?'

'We brought over some equipment for the Kiev Tank School. The hand-over of the equipment was delayed and, so that we shouldn't be idle, we were given different duties - some in the kitchens, others at the Control Point, and our lot were sent to the Pass Check Point.'

'Lance-Corporal Alekseyev?'

'Here.'

'First of all, send all these guardsmen on firewood duties.'

'Right, Comrade First Lieutenant!'

Across the asphalted, incredibly clean courtyard, we were taken to another small inner courtyard surrounded by a very high brick wall. The first thing which surprised me was the glaring orderliness of it all. All the sawn logs were arranged in such an accurate pile that their ends formed a polished wall. Every log had to be cut to a standard size of exactly twenty-eight centimetres and an error of one or two centimetres was severely punished. All these logs were destined for the stove, and such exactness in sawing them was completely pointless, but order is order.

The logs, which we were to cut with the same exactness, had been brought in one to two days earlier, and they were not just thrown down in a heap, but arranged with indescribable love and even, one would say, artistry. First of all, they were sorted according to thickness, with the thickest underneath and the thinnest ones on the very top. But whoever had built up this stack of logs apparently possessed an even finer artistic taste, as they had also taken the colour of the logs into consideration. Those at the right-hand end were darkest in colour, while to the left they gradually changed in colour, ending with completely white blocks. It fell to us to demolish this artistic creation and to cut the wood to the standard size and then build it up again into a pile.

Here too, in the same yard, lay the stump and roots of an entire tree of absolutely unimaginable form, resembling anything you wished, except a tree. It was a fantastic intertwining of immense cables and ropes, or maybe of something else, but in any case the image was very flexible. The intertwined sections were of such a complicated form that it was hard to believe that nature could manage to create such a wonder. But in spite of the complexity of these knots, looking for all the world like a coiled snake, this immense block nevertheless retained very great solidity in all its elements, and had been lying there most probably for more than a decade, judging by the thousands of old and new notches made in it by a saw.

All those who did not realise fully where they had landed and who still manifested any obstinacy were given the task of 'cutting some wood', that is to say of sawing this particular block. After one hour, somebody from the glasshouse authorities would come to see how things were going and he always feigned surprise that nothing had yet been accomplished; punishment inevitably followed. This particular task was always allotted to only one man at a time and never to two. And this one man was always supplied with a long, supple but absolutely blunt saw, which could be operated only by two men.

When we entered the yard, a dark-haired soldier was trying vainly to succeed in making at least a single cut. After twenty minutes, he was taken off and accused of shirking. And then, depending on the mood of the management at the time, the behaviour of the unlucky wood-cutter would be appraised as they saw fit, from shirking and insubordination (if he tried to prove that the task was impossible) to economic sabotage and refusal to obey orders. And, after such an accusation, the Chief of the glasshouse or his deputy could do just as he wished with the poor wretch. That wooden block is destined to have a long life. I, for one, am quite sure that it still lies there to this day in the very same place and that some unfortunate is still trying vainly to saw it up. He bites his lip, there are tears in his eyes, and his face registers total desperation . . . but time runs out . . .

Once we had started to saw the logs to the standard twenty-eight-centimetre size, we learned another very interesting fact. We intended first to saw them and then to arrange them according to their thickness and colour, and, only after that, to sweep up the sawdust.

'Oh, no, that won't do, it isn't done like that here. Here, there must always be order!'

So then, after having sawn only one log, we started to gather up all the sawdust by hand, down to the smallest speck. There was no broom and, after the second log and been sawn, the same process began again, and so on . . .

In the meantime, the glasshouse escort was wheeling in one poor wretch after another to saw up that unique block.

'What about sawing some wood, brother?'

Towards seven o'clock, the glasshouse yard became increasingly noisy. Lorries started to arrive, bringing back those on charges who had spent the whole frosty day working on countless different projects. Some had been moving tank tracks at a tank-repair works. Others had been unloading batches of artillery shells. They were all frozen, wet, starving and tired to death. And still they were all ordered to form up upon arrival, because after work, without any break, a three-hour training exercise was the order of the day. We also were ordered to form up, and that was exactly the moment when the count of time served by each inmate officially started - the whole working day up to this moment had just been loosening up.

Kiev glasshouse knows only two sorts of training - drill and tactics. I make no mention here of political training because this does not take place every day, but only twice a week for two hours each time, and not in the evening but in the morning, before work. I will tell of this later but for the moment I will concentrate on drill and tactics. One and a half hours are spent on drill and it is a pulverising business. Approximately a hundred inmates, in single file, move along the perimeter of the yard. They don't walk but they just slash along, marching to attention, lifting their legs to an unthinkable height. There is no one in the yard except the inmates - no superiors, no escort - but the yard shudders from their mighty tread. Only sometimes, one of the savage lance-corporals emerges from the porch:

'Hey, you! . . . with the big ears. No, no, not you - you. Did you see that film called Ordinary Fascism? There you are now, that's real marching for you ... So why can't you, my little pigeon, achieve the same excellence in marching as the men in the film? Now then, practise marking time.'

The man with the big ears goes to the centre of the yard and, marking time, lifts his knees as high as his chest. All the others marching round the yard redouble their own efforts. The fact of the matter is that the asphalt in the centre of the yard is slightly lower than that at the perimeter, a bizarre arrangement engineered on the personal initiative of Comrade Grechko, when he was still only Chief of the Kiev Military District. The idea is one of simple genius. During rain or melting snow, there is always a big puddle in the centre of the yard. Even during summer, when there is no rain, water is still pumped there under the pretext of watering the yard. So those who find themselves sent to the centre have to march round in the puddle. If there are about five men there at a time they will not only soak themselves up to the ears, but

they will also drench the others marching round the yard by the splashes they produce. There is no way of drying oneself in the glasshouse, as it is heated only during the day when the inmates are out working and, towards the evening, when the inmates return to their wards, the stoves are already cold, and there are no radiators at all. I myself experienced 'Grechko's bowl' on my own skin in March when the snow melted by day and there was a biting frost at night.

Drill training takes place every single day, regardless of weather or temperature, as do all the other 'measures'. One and a half hours of drill at our standard speed of sixty steps per minute makes 5,400 steps in all, each with the maximum raising of the legs, and an intolerable downward stretching of the instep, because no one wants to be sent into the middle of the yard. This is why drill training is called 'individual practice' and is then followed by 'collective practice' or tactics.

Tactics, as distinct from drill training, are not based on the personal fear of each man, but on socialist competition among the collective as a whole, and this is why it is so much more exhausting than drill.

All tactics boil down to one tactical skill - crawling Piastun*-fashion, with your head and whole body as close as possible to the ground, in our case to the asphalt. Hands and legs must move with the maximum agility and the body must twist and flex like that of a lizard. So now it's crawling. Every ward has now become an infantry section.

'Landmark - the birch tree! Section, towards the landmark, Plas-tuny! FORWARD!'

The stop-watch is turned off when the last man of the section reaches the birch tree and, if the time spent by the section as a whole proves unsatisfactory, then the last man home will be beaten in the ward during the night, because in the socialist world only beating ensures a conscientious approach.

'Well, your time wasn't bad' - and the filthy, wet with perspiration and suffocating members of the section sigh with relief - 'but your speed will not be taken into consideration, as this handsome fellow here had his arse sticking up all the time and was trying to move forward on all fours instead of crawling.' So the handsome fellow is sure of a beating, as he has let down the whole collective in Socialist Competition.

'Now then, let's try once more. Section to the departure point - at the double.'

*Plastuny were former Cossack infantry battalions, manned by poor Cossacks who could not afford the price of a horse. They were renowned for their skill in crawling on their stomachs like Red Indians. The word plastun is a derivative of plast, meaning 'layer'.

'MARCH! Landmark the birch tree. Section towards the landmark, PLASTUNY - FORWARD!'

'Ah! . . . This time your speed was worse! Well, never mind, we will soon train you!'

At the end of the training session, the glasshouse Chief or his deputy sums up. First, the worst ward is told the name of the man whose fault it is that they are all going to have to undergo another trial, and then follows the order: 'Landmark - Oak tree.'

'Oak tree' means that they must crawl straight through the centre of the yard, straight through the icy water and straight over the water obstacle invented by that most ingenious and brilliant leader. He was a clever one for inventions, Comrade Grechko was, until the withering disease eventually caught up with him!

Food in the Soviet Army is worse than that for any other soldiers in the whole world. Nevertheless, on the first day in the glasshouse, after having spent all day hungry and cold, and after unthinkable burdens, a soldier, already accustomed to any privation, still cannot overcome disgust at what is called 'supper' in the glasshouse. The first evening he cannot touch what is called 'food' at all. He is still incapable of accepting the fact that he must eat, not from his own private dish, albeit a dog's dish, but from a communal pan, containing some kind of mess faintly smelling of soup or even of sour cabbage soup. And, while the senses of hunger and disgust are still fighting each other, the short sharp order is given: 'Stand up! Form up outside!' After that wretched episode called supper, comes the evening check.

Under the corridor ceiling, in the frosty haze, the yellowish lamps glimmer dimly. The inmates stand in formation, there is not the slightest movement. This is the evening check. All wait for the order. After a quick roll-call the order is given.

'Ten seconds . . . GET UNDRESSED!'

Hell! Where did that bloody burst of speed come from? It is simply astonishing. But ten seconds were quite enough for a hundred men to undress fully. To tell the truth, everyone was carefully and secretly getting themselves ready for this order. Even during supper, each man had secretly unbuttoned one button on each sleeve in order to have only one button on his sleeve to deal with when the order came. All the buttons of his tunic collar seemed to be buttoned up, but in fact a small part of each was already slightly pushed inside the buttonhole, and he had only to pull at his collar to have all five buttons open at once. Experience is a great thing and every soldier knows about ten such tricks.

'First rank, three steps forward, MARCH! Second rank, ABOUT TURN!'

Both ranks are now facing opposite corridor walls. Everyone is naked. The wind drives a few snowflakes along the concrete floor.

And, while those savage lance-corporals are on the floor rummaging among our tunics, our trousers and our dirty leggings, creating a scene like a Soviet customs post, Captain Martyanov, Chief of the glasshouse, or his deputy, First Lieutenant Kirichek, is performing that sacred ritual: the inspection of our anal passages. It is a very responsible job. Maybe somebody has found a nail while working outside and brought it in, in his anus, and will let his blood out at night as he lies on the plank-bed. In the daytime he is watched by the escort, but at night, although the wards are permanently illuminated by a blinding light, nevertheless trouble always lurks nearby; perhaps somebody had a cigarette hidden in his anus and will have a secret smoke during the night. This operation requires special skills and, as we have seen, mere lance-corporals are not capable of performing it. So, let them rummage in our dirty linen. But, with the other operation, only a Soviet Army officer is qualified to cope.

'Fifteen seconds . . . GET DRESSED.'

All the inmates go to their wards and 'jobs time' has arrived. The glasshouse is not like a jail. The parasha* has no place in the glasshouse. There is a big difference between the glasshouse and a civilian jail. The jail authorities have plenty of time to influence a prisoner. The time available to the glasshouse authorities is limited and, naturally, they try to 'enrich the programme' to the maximum by exploiting any, or even all, of a man's physical needs to the full 'for educational purposes'. The exercise of one's physical needs is here elevated to the rank of their educational influence and is carried out under the vigilant eyes of the administration.

After the inmates are settled in their wards, the escort and the rest of the administration, sometimes including the Chief of the glasshouse himself, take up their posts and the procedure begins. Clanking the locks loudly, a lance-corporal and two members of the escort enter the ward. The prisoners are formed up, at attention, as if on parade. The lance-corporal then lazily pokes his dirty fingers at the chest of the first inmate:

'Off you go!'

The inmate rushes along the corridors and staircases. Another member of the escort is posted at every corner and shouts out:

'Faster!'

'Faster!'

'Faster!'

But the inmate needs no encouragement because he knows full well

*Originally a girl's name, this has come to mean the communal bucket used as a latrine at night.

that at any moment, under the pretext of insufficient speed, he may be sent back, sometimes after having nearly reached the cherished door.

'It looks very much as if you, my little pigeon, did not really want very much "to go" at all. Now then - about turn. Back to your ward!'

But, coming towards you, there is already another inmate belting up and down the staircases, showing a clean pair of heels. Having finished with one ward, the lance-corporal and the escort lock the door and go on to another one. Often, the lance-corporal may 'forget' to send one or two of the inmates to the toilet at all, and sometimes he may even 'omit' a whole ward altogether. However, there is nobody to complain to in any case. Everything here is being done without any breach of Soviet laws.

I here affirm categorically that not a single letter of the law is being infringed in any Soviet glasshouse. Let us take, for instance, 'jobs time'. That most democratic constitution in the world - the Soviet Constitution - ensures, for all citizens, the right to work. Now where else, if not in the glasshouse, can you indulge this right to your heart's content? Or, let us take the right to education. Whether you want it, or whether you don't, you must give three hours a day to drill and tactical training, plus political training twice a week. Is that not education? Or, for instance, the right to rest. Every day they take you to and from work, so use this time for resting, or at night on that plank-bed take your rest, then right up to reveille, at 0530 hours - if, of course, you were not arrested during the night in accordance with the regulations concerning the right to work. But neither in the Constitution nor in any other law is any mention made about the exercise of one's physical needs. So don't go and demand anything over and above what is stipulated in the constitution! Or, are you setting yourself up in opposition to our Soviet rule of law?

'Over here - Escort to me!'

At long last, after 'jobs time', follows what the inmates have been dreaming of all day from the very moment of awakening - retreat!

Once again the lock clanks, and once again the lance-corporal with the escort appear in the ward. The inmates are all standing to attention, and the senior prisoner in the ward reports to the all-powerful one about general preparedness for retreat. A hardly audible order is made with only a feeble movement of the lips which can really be interpreted any way you wish. But the ward does understand. Behind our backs, at a distance of approximately one metre, is the edge of our plank-bed. At this order, which we have seen rather than heard, all ten of us, just as we have been standing, backs to the communal plank-bed, we all perform a most prodigious feat - a single jump backwards on to the plank-bed. There is neither time nor room to plan or even to move our

hands: we have all been standing in one rank, tightly pressed together and, from this position, we perform a jump backwards into complete uncertainty. Who the hell really knows what our heads will crack down on? Will it be the edge of the plank-bed if I drop short, or will it be the brick wall if I overshoot the target, or will it be the ribs, elbows and skull of my nearest neighbour if the jump is right on target? In addition - and the most unpleasant aspect of all - there is the complete impossibility of swinging round and facing the bare planks, and therefore the absolute impossibility of softening the blow, which is always violently sudden.

There is the noise of crashing heads, a suppressed shriek, but everyone freezes in the pose in which they hit the plank-bed. One feels a terrible pain in the shoulder and a completely unbearable pain in the knee. One's head has at least not been split open - that's one good thing. The dead silence is suddenly shattered in another ward, which means that the neighbouring ward is being given some training. You see, the lance-corporal did not much care for their first retreat. Will we be for it today or not?

'Get up.' The order is given in an extremely quiet voice and the whole ward is immediately transformed from a horizontal to a vertical position. In less time than it takes to say it, we all stand to attention, in ranks, ready to fulfil any party or government order. It looks as if it is all because of that fat soldier in Airforce uniform that they have dragged us up. He is one of the staff clerks, those dregs of humanity, but we'll show him when night-time comes. He'll soon learn how to fulfil orders!

'Retreat!'

Again, there is the sound of crashing bodies and suppressed groans. Again, the whole ward freezes as ten bodies hit the plank-bed. What a shame! The fat clerk has missed! He made a terrific jump, but his body was too fat for a soldier. He came a cropper sideways on the edge of the boards, and froze motionless, with his hands at his sides, his body on the planks but his legs hanging over the edge. His face is a picture of horror and suffering. 'You fat pig, you'll pay for that tonight. The worst is still in store for you.'

The legs of the fat clerk start slowly slipping lower and lower, getting nearer and nearer to the brick floor. He gathers every shred of his strength in order, without moving, to attempt to transfer the weight of his body on to the planks. The lance-corporal patiently awaits the result of his balancing act. All the blood rushes to the face of the fat fellow, he stretches his neck and the whole of his body, trying surreptitiously to raise his legs. It seems momentarily that his body, stretched out like a ruler, will succeed in overbalancing his slightly bent legs, but the very next moment his legs start slipping down again and, in the end, the sole of his foot gently touches the floor.

'Get up . . . What's up, brother? Don't you want to sleep? You get the order to retreat, everybody else lies down like normal people and you apparently don't feel like sleep. Everybody has to go into training because of you. Well, okay. Off we go! I'll soon find some entertainment for you . . . Retreat!'

The order is given quietly and suddenly, counting on our having stopped paying attention, but we have learned to expect such tricks. You can't catch us like that! Nine men make a terrific jump, there is a crash and all movement freezes.

The lock creaks and I fall asleep immediately with my cheek resting on the unplanned boards, polished by the thousands of bodies of my predecessors. In the glasshouse there are no dreams, only complete oblivion, as one's whole organism is switched off. There is a blinding light in the wards throughout the night. The boards are bare, the spaces between the planks are three fingers wide, it is cold. There is only one's greatcoat for cover and it is permitted to put it under one's head and side. The coat is wet, one's legs too are wet. There is no feeling of hunger because, you see, only the first day has elapsed.

The glasshouse is not a prison. In prison, there is a collective of sorts, but it is still a collective for all that. Secondly, in prison, one finds people who have revolted, if only once, against laws, against society, against the regime. In the glasshouse, one finds only frightened soldiers mixed in with officer cadets. And cadets are people who voluntarily offer themselves as members of that social grouping totally deprived of all rights: junior Soviet Army officers. You can do what you like with them. Everyone who has been there in the glasshouse, and with whom I had an opportunity later to discuss all that I saw there, is unanimous that conditions in any one of the thousands of Soviet glasshouses could be made much more severe without the slightest risk of any organised opposition on the part of the inmates, particularly in large towns where officer cadets form the majority of all glasshouse inmates.

I woke up in the middle of the night, not from cold and not from the unendurable stench of nine dirty bodies compressed into a single, small, unventilated ward. No, I woke up because of an unbearable desire to visit the toilet. This happens when it is cold. Half the ward was awake, jumping up and down and generally dancing around. Through the peephole, the optimists, in the lowest possible whisper, were begging the escort to have pity on them, and take them to the lavatory. But there is no *parasha* in the glasshouse. It's not a civilian jail but a military establishment. Top brass visit this place and, in order to please them, there is no *parasha*.

Theoretically, the escort (as the very name implies) should, sometimes, at night, escort inmates, one at a time, to the lavatory. But this

could completely undermine the educational impact of such an important measure as 'jobs time'. That is why the attempts of any liberal escorts (themselves officer-cadets, who are changed every day) to acquiesce to the inmates' entreaties are rigidly suppressed. It is quite a different matter with the wards of those under investigation, or of the accused, or of the condemned; they are escorted off there at their very first request. And those in solitary confinement cells, where the position is worse, even they are sometimes taken out during the night, probably because they are usually psychopaths prepared to do any kind of damage; but, in general, where normal men are concerned, it is very bad indeed. They are never taken to the toilet during the night, because the escort knows that the ward as a whole, fearful of common punishment, would never allow anybody to relieve himself inside the ward.

The heavy bolt suddenly clanked, signifying either an incomprehensible favour on the part of the escort, or his anger at persistent demands. All those who had been dancing about only a moment ago in the ward, promptly jumped as noiselessly as tom-cats on to the plank-bed and feigned sleep. But it was only the fat clerk being pushed into the ward, having cleaned out the lavatories during the night after 'jobs time', and the door slammed shut with a bang. The fat clerk was completely exhausted, and his eyes were red from lack of sleep. One could see his tears and his plump cheeks were trembling. Groaning, he crawled on to the plank-bed, and putting his dirty cheek on to the hard planks he was instantly out for the count.

Meanwhile, the ward had come to life again, and I, like all the others, had started to dance about in anticipation.

'Staff shit!' said the tall dark-haired CW soldier. 'He went and pissed in the lavatory and now he's sleeping soundly. He's just like any other fat cow, who's never really done its turn and yet's now set up better than anyone else.' All those who were already awake wanted sleep more than life itself, because only sleep can conserve any remaining strength. But he was the only one who was sleeping at that moment, and that is why hatred towards him particularly welled up in all the rest of us simultaneously. The tall CW soldier takes off his coat and covers the head of the sleeping man. We all rush towards him, I jump on to the plank-bed and kick his stomach as if it were a football. Quite unable to shout, he only whimpers softly. Because of the noise we all produce, the footsteps of the escort slowly approach the ward doors. His indifferent eye surveys what is going on, and his steps slowly move off again with the same indifference. The escort is a brother officer-cadet, most probably he himself has been under arrest on more than one occasion. He understands us and is completely on our side. He

would not have minded coming into the ward and putting in the boot himself - but that is not allowed, the escort must not resort to violence. It is forbidden.

By this time it is probably already five o'clock in the morning. There are about thirty minutes left before reveille. This is the most difficult time of all. Oh, I can't stand it any more. Probably all those who performed badly during tactical training, or at work or during the evening check, or during retreat, are now being beaten in all the other wards.

I have never run so fast in all my life as at the first morning 'jobs time' in the glasshouse. Walls, floors, staircases and the faces of the escorts flashed past, and the only thought in my head was, 'I hope I arrive in time!' Nothing whatsoever could distract me from this thought, not even a familiar face, and those black tank corps shoulder-straps which rushed towards me. It was only later, after returning to my ward and getting my breath back, that I realised that I had seen a fellow cadet running from the lavatory just as I was. This officer cadet was a first-year cadet who had replaced us at the Check Point after we had been arrested, and this could mean only one thing: Colonel General Vladimir Filipovich Chizh, the Deputy District Commander, had arrested us upon entering our school and, in just one hour, upon leaving the school, he had arrested those who had replaced us. The Colonel General was a hard man indeed, and it is greatly to be regretted that he was only interested in one thing - the reception accorded him personally - and in nothing else whatsoever.

Return from Communism

Of all the billions of people who inhabit our sinful planet, I am one of the few who have lived under real communism and, thanks be to God, have returned from it, safe and sound to tell the tale. This is how it happened.

In the glasshouse, during the morning posting of inmates, Lance-Corporal Alekseyev made the following quick-fire announcement while poking our greasy tunics:

'You, you and you - project No. 8', which meant the tank factory, to load worn-out tank tracks, completely exhausting work with totally unattainable norms.

'You, you, and those ten there - project No. 27', which meant the railway station, unloading trucks of artillery shells, which was even worse.

The escort immediately collected together its detail of inmates and embarked them on a lorry.

'You, you, you and those over there - project No.110.' That was the worst of all, it was the oil refinery, and meant cleaning out the insides of immense reservoirs. There, one absorbed such a stench of petrol, paraffin, and other foul substances that it was quite impossible to eat or sleep. There was no issue of special clothing, and one was not supposed to wash either. But, for today anyway, it looked as if we had escaped.

The lance-corporal approaches.

And where are we going today?

'You, you and those three there - project No. 12.'

Where is that?

The escort took us aside, wrote down our names and gave us the usual ten seconds to get ourselves on to the jeep. Light and agile as greyhounds, we leapt under the tarpaulin roof of the new GAZ jeep.

While the escort was signing for our souls, I nudged the puny officer cadet with the artillery flashes with my elbow. Apparently, he was the most experienced of our number, and upon hearing the figure 12 he had visibly quaked.

'Where is that?'

'To communism, to Saltychikha* herself,' he whispered and in the same breath swore foully and inventively.

I swore too, for everyone knows that there is nothing on earth worse than communism. I had already heard much about communism and Saltychikha, what I did not know was that it was called project No. 12. Our escort, with a clatter of his automatic rifle, jumped in over the side of the GAZ jeep, which sneezed a couple of times, jerked once for the sake of order and sped off along the smooth pre-revolutionary cobbled road straight on to communism.

Communism is located on the south-western outskirts of that ancient Slavonic capital - the mother of all Russian towns - the thousand-year-old city of Kiev.

And, though it occupies a large slice of Ukrainian soil, it is simply impossible for the uninitiated just to catch sight of it or even of its four-metre-high boundary walls. Communism is hidden in a dense pine forest, surrounded on all sides by military bases, depots and stores. And, in order just to glimpse the walls of communism, one has to penetrate a military base which is defended by ever-wakeful guards armed with machine-guns and by fierce guard-dogs.

Our GAZ jeep was speeding on down the Brest-Litovsk highway and, after passing the last few houses, it dived smartly into an insignificant passage between two green fences, marked 'Entry Forbidden'. After about five minutes, the jeep stopped in front of grey, wooden, unpainted gates which in no way resembled the entrance to a shining bright tomorrow. The gates opened and, after having allowed us entry, instantly slammed tightly shut. We were in a mousetrap. On both sides there were walls about five metres high - behind us were some wooden, but clearly very solid gates, while those in front of us were metal and obviously more solid still.

From somewhere a lieutenant and two soldiers armed with submachine guns sprang forward to meet us; they quickly counted us, looked inside the jeep, into its engine and even beneath the jeep, and they checked the documents of both the driver and the escort. The green steel wall in front of us quivered momentarily, and then smoothly slid off to the left, opening out before our eyes the panoramic view of a pine forest, bisected by a broad and flat road resembling an airport runway. Beyond those steel gates, I had expected to see anything you like, but not a dense forest.

Meanwhile the jeep was still speeding on along the concrete road. On

*Saltychikha was a Tsarist landowner, notorious for cruelty to her serfs. The story goes that these same serfs later walled her up in one of the stone columns of her own mansion. This mansion eventually became a school for the daughters of the privileged, and the girls used to whisper to each other at night, in terror of the fate of the original owner.

both right and left, among the pine trees, one could distinguish the huge concrete structures of depots and stores completely covered over by earth and overgrown with prickly bushes. After some minutes we stopped again in front of an unbelievably high concrete fence. The previous procedure was repeated: the first gates, then the concrete trap, the check on papers, the second gates and then beyond that a straight level road into the forest, although this time the depots and stores were missing.

Finally, we stopped at a striped control barrier, guarded by two sentries. On either side of this barrier, stretching out into the forest, were wire fences, attached to which were grey watch-dogs straining at their leashes. I have seen all manner of dogs in my time but these particular ones immediately struck me as being somehow unusual. Only much later, I realised that every other chained dog barks furiously as it strains at the leash, while these enraged creatures were quite mute. They did not bark, but only growled, choking themselves with their own saliva and their furious rage. Being real watchdogs, they barked only in accordance with instructions.

Having overcome this last obstacle, the jeep stopped in front of a huge red placard, about six to seven metres high, on which prominent golden letters proclaimed: 'THE PARTY SOLEMNLY PROMISES THAT THE PRESENT GENERATION OF SOVIET PEOPLE WILL LIVE UNDER COMMUNISM!' And a bit lower in brackets was written: 'Extract from the Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, agreed at the XXII Congress of the CPSU.'

The escort yelled, 'Ten seconds!' - and, like little grey sparrows, we all flitted out from the jeep's interior and formed up at its rear side. Ten seconds - one could manage that, there were only five of us and to jump out of a jeep is easier than to clamber on to it over ice-covered sides; oh yes, and, in addition, we had grown much lighter these last few days.

A crude-faced lance-corporal with lordly manners appeared before us wearing officer's boots. He was one of the place's regular retinue. He explained something briefly to the escort, who then yelled, 'Hands behind backs! Follow the lance-corporal in single file!'

'Quick march!'

We moved singly along a paved path cleared of snow and, after rounding a beautiful plantation of young fir trees, we all suddenly stopped dead in our tracks without any order being given, we were so staggered by the unprecedented picture before us.

In a woodland clearing, surrounded by the young fir trees, buildings of amazing beauty were scattered about in picturesque disorder. Never before nor since, either in any fairy tale film, nor any exhibition of

foreign architecture, have I ever met such a turbulent, passionate and rapturous fantasy of colours, such an amazing intermingling of nature, in light, colour, elegance, taste, simplicity and originality. I am no writer and it is beyond my powers to describe adequately the sheer beauty of that place to which fate saw fit to transport me, once upon a time.

Not only I, but our escort too, all of us, open-mouthed, admired the view. The lance-corporal, apparently accustomed to such a reaction among strangers, shouted at the escort to bring him to his senses; the latter, still spellbound, straightened the strap of his automatic, first cursed us and then our mothers, and we began to straggle our way along a footpath paved with grey granite, past frozen waterfalls and ponds, past Chinese bridges, arching their cat-like backs over canals, past marble summer-houses and pools covered with coloured glass.

Having passed through this delightful little town, we found ourselves once more in a young fir-tree plantation. The lance-corporal stopped in a small clearing surrounded by trees and ordered us to rake away the snow, under which was revealed a trap-door. Five of us lifted its cast-iron lid and threw it to one side. A monstrous stench issued from the bowels of the earth. Holding his nose, the lance-corporal jumped back into the snow. We did not follow him of course, as by doing so we could easily have got a short sharp burst between our shoulder-blades. We merely clamped our noses tightly shut as we drew back from the cesspool.

The lance-corporal took a gulp of clean forest air and gave the order: 'The pump and hand barrows are there, and the orchard is - way - over there. By 1800 hours, the cleaning of the cesspool must be completed and the trees must be manured!' And then away he went.

This heavenly place where we had landed was called the 'Country-house of the High Command of the Warsaw Treaty Army', otherwise known as 'Project No. 12'. This country house was kept in case any member of the Warsaw Treaty High Command suddenly felt the urge to have a rest on the outskirts of ancient Kiev, Russia's former capital city. But the heads of the Warsaw Treaty organisation were more inclined to spend their rest periods on the Black Sea coast of the Caucasus. And so, the country house remained empty. If the Defence Minister or the Chief of the General Staff ever came to Kiev, there was yet another country house, officially named the 'Country House for Senior Officials of the Defence Ministry', or 'Project No. 23'. But, as the Minister of Defence and his First Deputies do not come to Kiev even once every ten years, this country house also remains empty. In the event of the arrival in Kiev of any Soviet Party or Government leaders, there were many other 'Projects' at the disposal of the Kiev Town Party or Executive Commit-

tees; yet others, more imposing still, at the disposal of the Kiev Regional Party Committee or the Regional Executive Committee; and, the most impressive of all, better by far than any of our military houses, which were of course entirely at the disposal of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party, the Ukrainian Council of Ministers and the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet. Since there was really plenty of room to accommodate any cherished guests, Country House No. 12 was permanently empty. Neither the Commander of Kiev Military District nor his deputies ever used it for the simple reason that they were all entitled to have their own personal country houses. Therefore, No. 12 came to be occupied by the Military District Commander's wife. In country house No. 23 resided his only daughter, while the Commander himself lived with whores in his personal country house. (The organisation supplying leading personnel with prostitutes is officially named 'The Song and Dance Ensemble of Kiev Military District'. Such organisations are in existence for all military districts, fleets, groups of troops, as well as for all other organisations of high standing.)

The staff that waits upon the wife of Yakubovskiy is huge. And every day, to help the countless cooks, servants, maids, gardeners and others, five to eight or, sometimes, up to twenty glasshouse inmates are brought here to perform the dirtiest work. Today is no exception to the rule.

Among the inmates themselves, the Warsaw country house was known by that one very bad word, 'Communism'. It is difficult to say why it had been so christened - perhaps it was owing to the placard at the entrance, or maybe owing to the fairy-tale beauty and charm of the natural surroundings. Then again, perhaps it was because, here, mystery and fascination were so tightly interlaced with the daily humiliation of people, or else it was simply because, organically speaking, beauty and shit are so very closely related! And, when it came to shit, there was enough here for anyone.

'Is the cesspool deep?' asks an Uzbek military engineer.

'It reaches to the centre of the earth.'

'But it could easily be connected to the town sewerage system by a pipe!'

'You fool, do you really believe that an Army General would defecate in the same sewer as you! You are still not old enough to have that honour. This system has been devised for the sake of safety, otherwise some secret paper could fall in, and what then? The enemy is ever watchful and uses all possible channels open to him. That is why a closed circuit has been devised here, to avoid the drain of information!'

'So, according to you, this self-same drain of information occurs through the generals' arses?'

'You don't understand a bloody thing,' the puny fellow from the artillery said, 'this system was invented simply in order to conserve generals' excrement, which, unlike ours, is full of calories. The quality of the shit is exactly proportionate to the quality of the food consumed, and if someone like Michurin had been given this much prime quality excrement, he would have glorified our motherland for centuries with the richness of the harvests he achieved!'

At this point our discussion was interrupted by our escort. It is of course an advantage if one's escort hails from the tank corps like oneself. Then, life is quite different, even though the escort knows full well that if he is too lenient towards prisoners, after his own stint of duty he, too, will find himself confined to the glasshouse, along with those same prisoners he was escorting only a little while earlier. But, all the same, a brother tank corps man is much to be preferred to a man from the infantry or the artillery. It is also not too bad when the escort, even if not one of the lads, is nevertheless an experienced third or fourth officer cadet. For, even though not from the same squad, they have probably been in the glasshouse at least once themselves: so they really do know what is what. The worst of all is when the escort consists of a bunch of young wet noses and strangers to boot. First year cadets are always the most stupid and the most strict. They go by the book. And it is one of these that we have been landed today.

He is tall with a big ugly face and, judging by his behaviour alone, he is obviously a first year man. Besides, everything he has on is new -coat, cap, boots - and such a thing would be quite impossible for an old-timer. The fellow's a rookie, and his badges are those of a signals unit, which in Kiev could only mean that he belongs to the Kiev Higher Engineering Radio Technical School or KVIRTU for short. In Kiev, these chaps are only referred to as 'Kvirtanuty'. This particular Kvirtanuty looks as if he is getting angry. So it must be time to start work.

And so our first working day under communism has begun. One fellow pumps up the shit, the remaining four carry the stinking sludge into the general's garden. My partner turned out to be that same puny artillery officer cadet who looked the most experienced of our number. The work was clearly beyond his powers. And, as we carried away our loaded hand barrows, he turned red in the face, groaned and generally looked as if he was going to collapse at any moment. I could not help him at all as I myself could hardly hold the handles on my own side. We could not sneak off with a lighter load either, as the other pair promptly started to protest: whereupon the escort threatened to report us to the powers-that-be.

But the poor fellow clearly had to have some support from some-

where, if not in deed then at least in word. With a loaded container, this was quite impossible, but on the return trip it was quite an easy matter as our journey took us about three hundred metres away from the stinking cesspool and from the escort so that we could get into conversation.

'Now then, artillery, how much longer are you in for?' I began when we had dumped our first load beneath a spreading apple tree.

'I have already served out my time,' he answered languidly, 'that is if we manage not to get "extra rations" today.'

'Lucky chap,' said I, sincerely envying him. 'Tell me, O God of War, how far are you off getting your golden shoulder-straps?'

'It's all been done already.'

'How so?' I just did not understand.

'Well, that's how it is. It's three days since the order reached Moscow. If the Minister signs it today - there you are - golden shoulder-straps, but he may only sign it tomorrow!'

I envied him once more. I had another year to wait. One more year at the Guards Tank School - a year is such a long time, unlike my comrades, I had not yet started counting in hours and minutes, but I counted only the days.

'You lucky bastard, artillery, you'll go straight from the glasshouse for a bath and then on to a graduation party. Some people certainly have all the luck.'

'If we don't get "extra rations",' he interrupted gloomily.

'There is an amnesty in that case.'

He did not answer, maybe because we were getting near to the ugly-faced escort.

The second trip proved considerably more difficult than the first for the artillery man, and he hardly managed to drag himself to the first trees. While I was tipping up the barrow, he rested all his weight upon the gnarled trunk of a tree nearby. I had to support the poor chap. I had already wasted two trump cards as neither the thought of his imminent graduation from military school nor his early release from the glasshouse had cheered him up even a little bit. My only hope was to boost his morale to the required level. This approach simply could not fail. So I decided to toss him the idea of the bright future in store for us, of communism, so to speak.

'Do you hear what I say, God of War?'

'What's up with you now?'

'Listen, artillery, life is hard for us now, but the time will come when we too will live in a paradise, like this - under communism. That will be life! Eh?'

'How do you mean? With our hands full of shit?'

'Oh, no, I don't mean that', I said, grieved by such lack of vision. 'What I am saying is that the time will come when we too will live in such heavenly gardens, in the same beautiful little towns with lakes, surrounded by hundred-year-old pine trees, and apple orchards or, better still, cherry orchards. See how much poetry there is in it . . . Cherry orchards! Well?'

'You are a fool,' he answered wearily. 'A real fool, even if you are a tank corps man.'

'Why am I a fool?' I asked indignantly. 'Now wait a bit, you. Why am I a fool?'

'And who, in your view, will carry the shit under communism? And now shut up, we are getting near.'

The question was so simple and it was put in such a mocking tone, it was like being pole-axed. At the beginning, it did not seem to be insoluble, but it was the first time in my life that any question about communism had ever arisen to which I could not find an immediate answer. Before, everything had been absolutely clear: everyone works as he wants, as much as he wants, according to his ability, and receives whatever he wants and as much as he wants, i.e. according to his needs. It was absolutely clear that, say, supposing one man wants to be a steel founder, right then, work for the common good and for your own, of course, because you are an equal member of society. You want to be a teacher? Right then, every kind of work is honoured in our society. You want to be a wheat farmer? What work can be more honourable than to provide people with bread? You want to become a diplomat - the way is open! But who will be busy in the sewers? Is it possible that there will be anybody who will say, 'Yes, this is my vocation, this is my place, I am not fit for anything better?' On the island of Utopia, it was prisoners who did such work as we are doing now, but under communism there will be neither crime, nor prisons, nor glasshouses, and no prisoners, because there will be no necessity for crime -everything will be free of charge. Take what you like - it is not a crime, but a necessity, and everybody will take according to his needs, that is the basic principle of communism.

We tipped up the third barrow and I exclaimed triumphantly,

'Everyone will clean up after himself! And, in addition, there will be machines!'

He looked at me with pity.

'Did you read Marx?'

'Indeed I did,' I said passionately.

'Do you remember the example of the pins? If one man is producing them, there will be three per day, but if production is divided between three men, one cuts the wire, another sharpens the ends and the third

attaches the heads, then there will be three hundred pins per day - one hundred per man. This is called division of labour. The higher the division of labour in a society, the higher is its productivity. But there has to be a master, a virtuoso, in every business, not just an amateur or dilettante. Now take Kiev, for instance, and see how each of its one and a half million inhabitants arranges his own sewerage system, in his free time, and cleans it and maintains it in good order. As for machines, Marx prophesied the victory of communism at the end of the nineteenth century, but at that time such machines did not exist, which means that at that time communism was impossible. Is that not so? These machines still do not exist, which means that communism is still impossible. Am I right or not? . . . And, so long as these machines are missing, somebody must rummage in somebody else's shit, and this, with your kind permission, is not communism. Let's assume that some day such machines will be invented, but even then somebody will still have to look after them and clean them, and that, too, will not be very pleasant work either. It's hard to believe that anybody will really ever want to do nothing but that throughout his whole life. Do you support Marxist theory about the division of labour, or aren't you a Marxist?'

'Of course I'm a Marxist,' I mumbled.

The time is fast approaching and so there are additional questions which demand independent study. Who, under communism will bury the corpses? Will it be self-service or will amateurs carry out the work in their spare time? Generally speaking, there is plenty of dirty work in society and everyone is not a diplomat or a general. Who will carve up the pig carcasses? Have you ever been in a fish-filleting outfit? The fish arrives and must be dealt with immediately and there's no bloody mechanisation either. So, what then? And who will sweep the streets and cart off the rubbish? To cart off rubbish nowadays, one needs qualifications and not low ones either, and dilettantism is no bloody good either. And will there be any waiters under communism? For the time being it's certainly a profitable business, but when money is liquidated, what will it be like then? And finally, for someone who at present has not the slightest idea about how to set about shit-cleaning, like Comrade Yakubovskiy himself for instance, has he any personal interest at all in the arrival of that day, when he will have to clean up his own shit all by himself? So just think it over! And now, we are getting near to the escort again, so shut up!'

'You chatter too much, you should be working!'

'Look here, artillery, do you mean that in your opinion communism will never come at all?'

At this, he stopped dead in his tracks, thunderstruck by the very outrageousness of my question.

'Of course not!'

'But why not? You counter-revolutionary bastard, how have you managed to avoid the chop? You're a dirty anti-Soviet swine.' And, with all my might, I heaved that very heavy hand barrow down on to the ground and a stinking golden mass spilled out over the blindingly white snow and over the granite pathway.

'Damn your bloody balls,' the artillery man spat out in utter rage. 'Now we'll each get an extra five days - like nobody's business, you just see if we don't! But, no ... it looks as if no one has noticed; let's cover it with snow.' And feverishly, we started to throw snow on to the dirty patch. But our escort was already running towards us.

'You idle bastards! What have you done now? You're chattering again, are you? But I'm answerable for you and I'll soon make you dance for it.'

'Wait! . . . Don't make a noise, we'll soon cover it with snow and no one will see anything. It's a very heavy carrier and it just fell out of our hands. It's good for the garden anyway. The snow will melt in a week and wash away all traces.'

However, the ugly-faced escort did not relent.

'You should work instead of chattering! But I'll make you dance for your pains.'

Then the artilleryman changed his tone.

'You complete fool! First serve for as long as we have and then you'll have something to shout about. Report us and you'll be punished along with us for not noticing in time.' I supported these remarks.

'You are still young and silly and haven't experienced any real difficulties in your life. As for this man here, a report has already been sent and, in three days' time, he will be made an officer - but you are still a snotty boy

'Who are you calling a snotty boy? Right you are!'

He shouldered his automatic and shouted:

'Back - to - work! Step lively! I'll teach you to show your paces.'

The artilleryman looked indifferently in the escort's direction and calmly said to me: 'Let's go . . . It's no use trying to reason with a sheep . . . He's going to be arrested today . . . You can take my word for it.'

And off we strolled in the direction of the trap door.

'He'll report us for sure,' said the artilleryman confidently.

'No,' I said, 'he'll only play the fool a bit and then recover towards the evening.'

'Okay, but you'll see!'

'Don't be mournful, my friend, and don't sigh. Take life as a horse by its bridle.'

Tell everyone to piss off, at the very least. So that they don't tell you first to fuck off!'

'That, artillery, is one of my firm convictions.'

'And mine too!'

Two kindred souls ... in the General's sewer!

'Look here, you counter-revolutionary. Why do you claim that communism will never come?'

'Because . . . But don't throw down your shit-carrier again . . . Because neither our Party nor its Leninist Central Committee has the slightest need of communism.'

'You're nothing but a counter-revolutionary liar!'

'Blow your nose with both nostrils, you miserable idiot. Quieten down and stop yelling, it's impossible to talk here. Have patience and in a minute, when we have unloaded, I'll teach you all.' We unloaded.

'Okay. Just you imagine that communism arrives tomorrow morning.'

'No, that's impossible,' I interrupted. 'The material technical base has to be built first.'

'Just imagine that the year 1980 has arrived and that the Party, as it promised, has built this base. So, what exactly does our ordinary run-of-the-mill Secretary of a District Party Committee stand to gain from this communism? Eh? Plenty of caviare? But he's got so much caviare already that he can even eat it through his arse if he wishes. A car? But he has two personal Volga cars and one private one as well, in reserve. Medical care? Food, women, a country house? But he already has all of these things. So our dear Secretary of the most Godforsaken District Party Committee stands to gain bugger-all from communism! And what will he lose? He will lose everything. At the moment, he's warming his belly at the best health resort on the Black Sea coast, but under communism all men are equal as they are in a bath-house, and there won't be enough room for everybody on that beach. Or, let's assume that there's an abundance of products, just take whatever you like and as much as you like in any shop. Also let's assume that there's not even a queue. There will still be inconveniences, and you will still have to go and collect things. But what good is that to him, if the local yokels already bring him everything he needs? Why would he prefer tomorrow if today is even better? He will lose everything under communism - his country house, his personal physicians, his hirelings and his guards.

'So, even at District Committee Secretary level, nobody is interested in communism's arrival tomorrow, or the day after for that matter. And when it comes to the Yakubovskiys and Grechkos of this world,

communism has long since ceased to be of any interest to them at all. Did you see how they jumped on China because of the so-called levelling process there, when everyone was wearing identical trousers, so to speak. And what about us, how will we live under communism? Will there be any fashions, or will we all be wearing prisoners' jackets? The Party says not - but if that is true, how can everybody be provided with fashionable clothes, if they are free and everyone takes as many as he wants? And where will you get all the fox and polar bear fur for all the women's coats? Yakubovskiy's wife wears a different ermine coat every day. If communism suddenly came tomorrow, would you be able to convince the milkmaid, Marusya, that her thighs are any less desirable than those of Yakubovskiy's wife or that her status in society is less honourable? Marusya is a young woman and she also wants ermine and gold, and diamonds. But do you believe that the old stoat, Yakubovskaya, will give up her furs and diamonds without a fight? Fuck off with you! This is why they don't want communism to come tomorrow, and that's all there is to it. And that is why an historical period is invented. Did you ever read Lenin? When did he promise us communism? In ten to fifteen years! Wasn't that so? And Stalin? Also in ten to fifteen years, though sometimes it was even twenty. And Nikita Sergeyevich*? In twenty years, and the whole Party swore to the people that this time there would be no deception. Do you really believe that in the year 1980 communism will finally come? Not bloody likely: and do you think anybody will ask the Party to explain this lie? No, there will not be a single questioning voice.

'And did you ever reflect my dear tankman, on why all our rulers mention ten to fifteen years? It's to give them time for their own "dolce vita" and yet still not destroy other people's hopes. And, incidentally, also time for all those promises to be long forgotten. Who remembers now what Lenin promised, once upon a time? And when 1980 does arrive, precisely no one will recall that the promised year has, at last, arrived. It is certainly about time for an answer. The time is almost ripe for the Party to give an account of itself.'

'Are you really a communist at all?'

'I am not a communist, but I am a Party member and it's about time you saw the difference!'

He became silent, and we did not speak any more until the evening.

Towards evening, we had finally succeeded in cleaning out the pit to its very bottom. We had scooped out everything when there suddenly

*Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, the Soviet Party leader subsequently deposed by Brezhnev.

appeared on the path a skinny, wrinkled woman, wearing an ermine fur coat and accompanied by the lance-corporal, whose face had by now lost its lordly expression and was wearing that of a country yokel instead.

'Now look,' warned the artilleryman, 'if Saltychikha sentences us to extra days in the glasshouse - don't you go kicking up a fuss. She's only a mere woman but she'll have you up in front of the tribunal, quick as look at you, if you don't watch out.'

The lance-corporal inspected the cesspool and the garden, and reported in oily tones, 'They have done it all. I kept them at it all day.'

She smiled faintly, approached the cesspool and looked down into its depths.

'They did not work badly, all day I. . .' the lance-corporal continued unctuously.

'But they dirtied the path and covered up the dirt with snow,' observed our escort.

The lance-corporal cast a stealthy look of utter hatred at the escort.

'Which path was that?' enquired the skinny woman almost tenderly.

'Well, just let's go over here, let's go and I'll show you,' and he began to stride off along the path with the skinny woman tripping along behind him.

Night was falling and it was getting frosty and the escort had some difficulty in kicking away the lump of frozen snow which covered the dirty spot.

'Here it is, they covered it with snow and thought I wouldn't notice it. But I see everything!'

'Who is responsible?' shrieked the old hag.

'Those two there . . . they thought they would get away with it and pass unnoticed . . . But we notice everything

'Five days . . . each,' hissed the old hag. 'As for you, Fedor ... as for you . . .' and, her face distorted by rage and without even finishing the sentence, she wrapped her fur coat more tightly around her and swept off in the direction of the fairy-tale small town. The lance-corporal's face twisted in a grimace and he turned towards our escort who, apparently, had not yet realised that he had accidentally dropped the all-powerful Fedor right in it.

'Take your rabble away then! I won't let you forget this, you bastard!'

The puzzled escort looked at the lance-corporal:

'I was only doing my best . . .'

'Get out of here, you scum. I'll get even with you one day!'

We stamped off past the wonderful little town, which in the darkness managed to become still more entrancing. Children splashed about in a pool, separated from the frost only by a greenish, transparent wall. A

tall woman, in a severe blue frock and white apron, busied herself with them.

First Lieutenant Kirichek, the Deputy Chief of the Kiev Garrison glasshouse, had already been informed of the 'extra rations' handed out to us as he awaited our return from communism. The first lieutenant opened a thick ledger.

'Five days each. So ... we write down . . . Five . . . days . . . arrest. . . From the Commander of the Military District . . . for . . . bre . . . ach of military discipline ... - Oh, hell,' he exclaimed suddenly, 'the Commander has flown to Moscow for a Party congress. How can I . . .?' He looked at the book, and then, on second thoughts, inserted the word 'Deputy' before the word 'Commander.' Now everything was in order. 'So, Suvorov, your first five days were given to you by the Deputy Commander and so were the second five days. Now, let's see who'll give you the third lot.' Amused by his own joke, he gave a sort of neighing laugh.

'Escort!'

'Yes, comrade First Lieutenant!'

'Put these two pigeons in 26. Let them sit there for one or two hours to learn that extra rations is not just extra time to serve, but something with rather more bite.'

Ward 26 in the Kiev glasshouse is known by the title of 'Revolutionary', because once, before the Revolution, a famous petty criminal called Grigoriy Kotovskiy, on trial for rape, had escaped from it. Later, in 1918, Kotovskiy and his gang joined the Bolsheviks and, for invaluable services of a criminal nature, were later officially renamed revolutionaries instead of pickpockets on the personal instructions of Lenin himself. But the experience gained from this famous revolutionary's escape was exploited to the full, and there were no further departures from the notorious ward.

There is neither plank-bed nor bench in this ward, only a spittoon in one corner. And it is not just standing there by chance, it is filled to the very brim with chlorine. The window through which that hero of the Revolution escaped has long ago been bricked up, and the ward itself is so small, and there is so much chlorine, that to remain there longer than five minutes seems a complete impossibility. Tears stream from one's eyes, one chokes for breath, saliva fills one's mouth and one's chest feels like bursting from the pain of it.

As soon as we were pushed into the ward, the experienced artilleryman, though himself already coughing and choking, still managed to push me away from the door which I was going to kick. Bowing to his experience, I gave up the attempt. Much later, I discovered that, as

usual, he was quite right. It emerged that, just opposite our ward 26, there was ward 25, expressly intended for those who could not stand being in ward 26. After a sojourn in ward 25, anyone and everyone calmed down and returned meekly to ward 26.

Meanwhile, a third person had been pushed into our ward. I couldn't have cared less who he was and did not even try to discern his features through my tears, but the artilleryman had been awaiting his arrival. Nudging me (it was absolutely impossible to speak), he gestured with his hand towards the third man. And, after I had rubbed my eyes, I recognised our very own escort.

Usually, a period under arrest does not start with wards 21, 25 or 26. Only those given 'extra rations' pass through one of these wards and, sometimes, even through all three of them. Our first-year 'Kviritanuty' had started his particular epic in ward 26. Was this because the all-powerful lance-corporal had complained to the ADC or to the deputy commander, or was it because our escort had protested when, after surrendering his automatic and cartridges, he had suddenly learnt that his platoon was actually returning home but that he, for some unknown reason, was to remain here, on a charge, for ten days. Or maybe the first lieutenant had decided to put him with us just for the fun of it, knowing in advance what our reaction was bound to be.

In the whitish haze of chlorine fumes, the new inmate choked in his first fit of coughing. His eyes filled with tears. Helplessly, he groped in the void, trying to find a wall. We were no three musketeers, and the two of us had not the slightest inclination to forgive. It might be said that it is wrong to beat a helpless and temporarily blind man, especially at the moment when he least expects any assault. This may very well be true for anyone who has never seen the inside of this ward. But we construed the appearance of our escort as a gift of fate, for the one and only time when we could beat him up was when he was quite helpless. At any other time, he would have made us scatter like cats, he was much too powerful. I write all this exactly as it happened. I, personally, showed no finer feeling at all, and have not the least intention of falsely attributing to myself any high ideals. But those who have been there will understand, and those who have not can never be my judges.

The artilleryman made a sign and, as the tall escort straightened himself between fits of coughing, I kicked him hard in the crotch. He let out an inhuman scream and bent over double in agony. At this same moment, the artilleryman kicked him as hard as he could on the left knee-cap. And, as the escort writhed on the floor, the artilleryman kicked him again, twice, in the stomach. As a result of all this exertion, we had swallowed a lot of chlorine. I vomited, the artilleryman choked. Meanwhile, the escort was lying prostrate on the floor, and we could

not have cared less. I vomited again and felt quite certain that I was not long for this world. I had no wish for anything, not even for fresh air. The walls shook and started to rotate around me. From afar, I heard the clank of the door being opened but I was totally indifferent.

Apparently, I regained consciousness quite soon. The escort, still unconscious, was carried past me along the corridor. And, suddenly, I felt unbearably sorry that, when he regained consciousness on the plank-bed, he would still not understand what had happened to him in ward 26. Immediately, I decided to put matters right and to finish him off while there was still time. I strained with all my strength to get up from the concrete floor but all the effort dissolved into a pitiful attempt to move my head.

'He's come to,' said somebody from somewhere above my head.

'Let him have another whiff.'

The artilleryman was still on his feet and now he was vomiting. Somebody quite close to me said, 'On the orders of the Defence Minister, he's already an officer!'

'The Minister's order came today, but it was signed yesterday,' objected another voice. 'That means the amnesty covered only the time served yesterday. But, today, after becoming an officer, he was put on another charge by the Deputy Commander of the District and therefore this period is not covered by the ministerial amnesty.'

'Bugger it, can't we approach the Deputy Commander personally in connection with this case since it's so exceptional?'

'But the Deputy Commander has never set eyes upon your newly-fledged lieutenant. It was done on the orders of Himself's wife. Himself has gone to the Party conference. You do not propose to ask Herself, do you?'

'Too right!' agreed the second voice.

'And we can't set him free under the amnesty either! Otherwise, what will happen if she comes tomorrow to check up? Then all our heads will roll!'

'Quite right!'

And so it happened that, while our artilleryman was cleaning the sewers, the Minister of Defence had signed the orders, promoting him and, with him, another two hundred fortunate officer cadets to the rank of lieutenant. In such cases, the ministerial order is normally an absolution. But, while this order was on its way from Moscow, our artilleryman had been put on a further charge purporting to emanate from the Deputy Commander of the Kiev Military District. And no one could do anything about it.

But, even so, he had officially become an officer, and his place was in the officers' quarters which were separated from those of the common

herd by a high wall. So, we embraced like brothers, like two men who are very close and yet who are destined to part from each other for ever. He smiled wanly at me and, just as he was, filthy from the excrement of the wife of the future Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty Powers, Marshal of the Soviet Union Yakubovskiy, but now at long last without any escort, he went towards the iron gates leading to the officers' quarters.

On that very day, in the capital of our Motherland, in that most heroic city of Moscow, to the accompaniment of the thunderous applause of thousands of delegates and of our numerous brothers, assembled from all the corners of the earth, in the Kremlin Palace of Congresses, the work of the XXIII Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union began. It was an historic occasion. From that day forward, the Party promised the present generation of Soviet people . . . nothing at all!

Risk

It may be argued that political training in the glasshouse is the very best time of all. Just sit there on a stool for an hour and a half, just nod off and do absolutely nothing. It would seem hard to invent any better form of relaxation. Any such thought is pure imagination and could only enter the head of one who has never seen the inside of a glasshouse or of someone who has not been warned in advance how to behave during a spell of training there. For the inexperienced inmate, the seeming simplicity of it all can turn out to be a load of trouble. The inmate is pleased beyond bounds by his first attendance at a political training session but he has only to let himself be distracted for a single moment, to forget for a single second where he is and what he is there for, and misfortune will instantly strike.

Exhausted by lack of sleep and the terrible cold, by damp and hunger, by punishing work, by constant humiliations and insults and, what is worse, by the expectation of still more terrible things to come, after one has calmed down a little and got warm, one's organism does finally relax for a moment or two.

And if one slackens, even momentarily, this steel spring, taut from the very first moment of being in the glasshouse, gets instantly out of hand and unwinds spontaneously in a flash . . . and one loses all control.

Exactly that is happening nearby to a little soldier who, most probably, has never been in the glasshouse before - his eyes are glazed, his eyelids stick together, he is going to fall asleep . . . any moment now he will bury his head in the dirty, hunched-up back of that weedy sailor who came to Kiev on leave and was picked up by a patrol at the railway station. It looks as if the sailor will also drop off to sleep at any moment. I am sorry for the soldier, for the sailor, and for myself too . . . but my feet are getting warm . . . and my head feels intoxicated. I can hear the ringing of little bells . . . they sound so sweet . . . my head droops on to my chest . . . but my neck seems to be made of cotton wool, it will never bear the weight of my head ... it will surely break ... I must relax my neck.

And there you are, my little one, you are done for and, instead of a

nice warm plank-bed, a stinking lavatory awaits you at night, and the kitchen awaits you too, which is still worse. And, when you have served your time, you will be given an extra three days, just to teach you not to dream of a nice little slice of black bread, or of dry socks, but, instead, of the policies of our beloved Party, which open before us such bright new horizons. And that is how it goes.

It was not the first time for me - not in the Kiev glasshouse, it is true, but in Kharkov. And there is no real way of distinguishing which of the two is better. Of course, 'communism' in Kharkov is not the same, but a rather more modest affair. But the tank factory is a good deal bigger than that in Kiev and every day half of all the glasshouse inmates are raked in there and it's no picnic. But, when it comes to political training, I have known the ropes for a long time and you won't ever catch me on that score.

At first, I did not think about sleep because I was much too hungry, but I also tried not to think about food either as such dreams made my stomach ache. And there was another thing which had been bothering me from the very start of political training and that was how to change my socks. Those I was wearing had been wet through for six whole days and it made no difference how you put them on. Outside, frost and slush alternate. It's cold to the feet, it's wet ... I wish I could change my socks . . . Stop! That's a very dangerous thought. One must not think about dry socks! Such thought is pure provocation! It must be promptly driven out, otherwise, one is in very deep water indeed. Now, it seems to me that my feet are completely dry . . . that I had put them on the radiator during the night, although there are no radiators in the glasshouse . . . and that they have dried out during the night. They are so dry now that they won't even bend . . . and now my feet are so warm . . . STOP IT! I'm not asleep! Two hefty lance-corporals, charging through the room, are bearing down on me. Fuck your mother, you bastards, I wasn't asleep! . . . The lance-corporal angrily heaves me aside and continues to carve his way through those seated behind me. Involuntarily, I turn my head to watch him and, the very next moment, realising the danger, I turn it back again. But one moment is enough to take in the faces of those seated behind. All, without exception, were the faces of men crushed by fear. Sheer animal terror and supplication registered in about fifty pairs of eyes. Only one thought registered on all their faces. 'Oh, please don't let it be me!' Probably the same expression had been on my own face a moment before, when I thought the lance-corporals were homing in on me. God, how easy it is to frighten us! How pitiful is a frightened man! To what depths will he sink to save his skin!

Meanwhile, the lance-corporals have caught hold of a pilot officer

cadet who sits slouched right in the very corner. This future ace, like a heavy wooden doll with strings instead of joints, wasn't sleeping, he had just switched off completely and was out for the count. And, while the lance-corporals carry this defender of the motherland out along the passage, his head hangs loose like some trinket on a chain. You are wrong, O Air Ace, you should not lose control of yourself! That will not do, little falcon! You weakened and, now, they will put you in number 26 revolutionary ward for a whiff of chlorine and you will soon come to and then you'll go into 25 and, only after all that, they will give you another five days, it's as easy as falling off a log! Hell! Just how long will the first lieutenant go droning on about our beloved Party? No bloody watch, no nothing! Seems like five hours we've been sitting here already and still he can't get it over with! If only I could change my socks, it would be easier to go on sitting here. I can't stand it any more. My head gets heavier by the minute, as if a pair of huge cast-iron dumb-bells had been placed inside it. Only . . . my feet are cold. If only new socks ... Or even if the lance-corporals would carry away those who have passed out more often - it would make a change, it would relieve the monotony and I might manage to see it through. It would be good to get out into the frost now, or to the petrol refinery, or to the tank works. If only my feet were comfortable.

'ANY QUESTIONS?'

A resounding 'NO' explodes from a hundred throats. It's salvation! It's the end of political training! It's over . . .

Now comes the order! 'Form up for relief . . . you've got one minute and a half.' This means that I must rush, with all the combined might of my body and soul, with all my wish to live, straight for the exit, straight into a doorway choked with the stinking bodies of other dirty inmates like me and, then, heaving them all aside, break out into the corridor. It is very important not to stumble - one would be trampled underfoot since, naturally, everyone wants to live! Racing upstairs seven steps at a time, I must get to the second floor and grab my coat and cap. It is most important to find one's own coat quickly since if, later on, somebody gets yours, which is too small for him he will not be able to get it on and you will soon be caught and get five days for stealing, and the other big ninny will be put in the same ward as you for his sluggishness, and then both of you will have time to find out who is right and who is wrong and whose fists are stronger. Then, with coat and cap in hand, one must crash straight through the upward-rushing stream of inmates desperate to get their own coats and caps, and rush back down. There's already a pile-up at the exit and the lance-corporals are on the look-out for the stragglers. So just launch yourself into the crowd like an ice-breaker - smash, break and crunch. One and a half

minutes have nearly expired but you still haven't formed up, you are still not properly dressed, your red star is not yet lined up with your nose, and your cap is still not sitting precisely two fingers above your eyebrows . . . it's no good . . .

The order 'Form up to receive orders' will be given at any moment. Everybody stands tense, ready for a superhuman effort, ready to rush and crash headlong into others, to carry out the order . . . but the first lieutenant hangs back on purpose . . . to test our readiness to be standing to attention in one and a half minutes ... Is everyone imbued with the importance of the moment? Has everyone screwed himself up into a tight ball? Is everyone so strained that he is ready to gnaw at his neighbours with his teeth? But the first lieutenant's gaze strays off somewhere into a corner, and no one dares to turn his head to find out what could possibly have attracted the attention of the Deputy Commander of the Kiev Garrison glasshouse at such a moment as this. It is a hand which has attracted the first lieutenant's attention, a dirty hand which has been cleaning lavatories for the last two weeks and which has not been washed once in all that time. And at that very moment when the first lieutenant asked the traditional question 'Any questions?' - the answer to which is always, as loudly as possible, 'NO QUESTIONS' - this hand was raised in a distant corner. Now, no one ever asks any questions in the glasshouse; so much is clear from the very first moment. And here you are! Just fancy, somebody now wants to ask a question!

The first lieutenant knows absolutely all the answers to all possible questions. In addition, he is so mighty and all-powerful that he can destroy anyone who presumes to disturb his peace with such impertinence. Even after the report of some First Secretary of a District Party Committee, no one dares to ask any questions. And here we have a member of the lower orders trying to disturb the peace of the Deputy Chief of the Kiev Garrison glasshouse himself!

The first lieutenant is clearly very interested by this phenomenon, the more so since he sees that it is not the inmate's first day in the glasshouse and that he must fully realise the degree of risk to which he is exposing himself and all those who, like himself, are under arrest.

The first lieutenant is a psychologist and he certainly realises full well why this officer-cadet with the hollow eyes, an expert in electronics, is taking such a risk: clearly he has only one or two days left to serve in the glasshouse but, if he is then sent to the tank factory, of course he will not be able to fulfil his norms and will surely be given another five days, which could transform him permanently into an oppressed, humiliated, intimidated semi-idiot. It is conceivable that his service and his career will even be furthered by such an ineluctable

process, but this is not what the officer-cadet wants nor what he is ready to take any risk to avoid. He has obviously decided to ask his question simply in order to flatter the first lieutenant and thus to secure for himself a timely discharge. But it is not an easy matter to flatter the omnipotent! And if that flattery is taken exception to as being crude flattery . . .? So then, the flattery, in the form of a question, must clearly combine within itself something very original and must even verge upon the permissive . . . And well we all knew it!

'What do you want?' the first lieutenant enquired politely, thus emphasising his respect for the bravery on display.

'Officer-cadet Antonov, arrested for fifteen days and thirteen of them already served,' he reported efficiently. 'Comrade First Lieutenant, I have a question!' A sinister silence descended upon the room. We had all been waiting for this moment, but the unusual impertinence of it struck us all very forcefully. It was as if a fly, after having warmed itself on the hot stove, were to dive down on us from the ceiling with the thunderous boom of a strategic bomber. We shuddered and hid our heads in our shoulders, as if trying to soften the blow, if sheer unadulterated rage descended upon any head in that room.

'Put your question ...' - and then, as an afterthought, the first lieutenant added, 'Please.'

'Comrade First Lieutenant, tell me, please . . . will there be any glasshouses under communism?'

My shoulders cringed, and my head sank down even lower. I was not the only one who expected a pole-axe in the neck. Only the man who had asked the question stood there, proud and straight, his sunken breast thrust forward and looking, with those intelligent grey eyes of his, straight into the eyes of the omnipotent one. The latter was thoughtful for a while, then his thick lips parted in an almost childlike smile. He obviously enjoyed the question. Mischievous lights caught fire in his eyes and he pronounced the words with complete conviction and faith! 'There will always be a glasshouse!' Whereupon, he burst out laughing. The omnipotent one looked once more at the electronics expert and then added heartily, 'Good lad! And now . . . and now ... at the double ... to the lavatories, and see to it that before evening comes they shine like a cat's testicles!' Hundreds of throats sighed with envy at the very thought. 'Right you are, Comrade,' he responded joyfully.

And can anything better than that ever be invented. It is true that, after morning high-speed 'jobs time', the lavatory is a pretty filthy place but, in two or three hours, it can easily be licked clean enough to be proud of it. And then . . . and then, throughout the whole day, just pretend that you are improving on what has already been done. After all, it is not that bottomless, stinking pit of communism itself! Oh, no!

Not that! This is only a lavatory when all is said and done. It's only at night that it's not very pleasant to clean it, because that's instead of sleeping, but during the day, in the warmth and in comfort . . . 'Form up for duty detail, you've got one minute and a half!' With the weight of my whole body I lurched forward.

That was a wonderful day, and I was lucky for, as one of a small group of inmates, I found myself in the regional Military Hospital lugging about bales of dirty linen. Our escort was a fourth-year artilleryman who had obviously been in the glasshouse himself more than once. And when, late in the evening, he gave us a ten-minute break and we sat about on ice-covered logs of wood leaning our weary backs up against the warm walls of the furnace, and a tender-hearted, sprightly nurse from the skin-venereal department brought us a whole box of chewed scraps of wonderful white bread, we ate them with delight. I am quite incapable of describing the ecstasy of that unforgettable day. But I, for one, am sure that each of us, in that moment, thought only of that brave officer-cadet, about the risk he had taken upon himself, about the exactness of the psychological calculation he had made and, in general, about the limitless possibilities of the human mind.

April 1967. The final days before graduation from the Kharkov Guards Tank Commanders' School.

Ever Ready!

The boots shone so that you could have used them as shaving mirrors and the trousers were so well pressed that, if a fly had brushed against the crease, it would have been sliced in two. We were to take over as town patrol and our outward appearance was checked personally by Colonel Yeremeyev, the Military Commandant of Kharkov. And he didn't like jokes! The smallest fault in one's uniform meant ten days under arrest. Everyone had long been acquainted with this as being the accepted norm. And now the Colonel was giving his briefing. 'In conclusion, the productivity norms: railway station - 150 convictions; town part - 120; airport - 80; the remainder - 60 each.' The Colonel here omitted to mention the main point, but there was no need, as everybody knew that those guilty of under-fulfilment were not relieved at 2400 hours, as prescribed, but were sent out on the 'bigger round', that is to say on all-night duty; and if, towards morning, the patrol did not get another thirty convictions, then it was the glasshouse for them all and yesterday's patrol would find itself in the same wards where the earlier victims of this very same patrol were already sitting. All this was well known and there was no need to remind anyone of the facts. Norms are scientifically based, and are verified in practice over many years' experience. Well then, our objectives were clear! Our tasks had been clearly defined! So now, get to work, Comrades!

Our patrol consisted of three men: Captain Sadirov and two officer-cadets in their last year. Our tour of duty would last a total of 480 minutes. We would be relieved at 2400 hours. Our quota was sixty offenders, or one arrest every eight minutes. In other words, any military man we met must be guilty of something. So if, during these eight hours, we only manage to find fifty-nine soldiers, seamen, sergeants, warrant-officers and officers, then a 'bigger round' was guaranteed and, at night, where on earth are you supposed to catch another thirty men?

The success of patrol work depends to a large extent on the character of the patrol chief himself. If he is strict enough and resourceful enough then the quota can be fulfilled.

'Comrade Sergeant, you are breaking regulations on the correct form of dress.'

'No, comrade Captain.' Everything the sergeant has on is shining, and there is obviously nothing to quibble at.

'In the first place, you are arguing with the head of the patrol and, secondly, the top button of your tunic shows the symbol of Soviet power facing the wrong way. Show me your papers!'

And it was a fact that the shining button, with its hammer and sickle, within a five-pointed star, was sewn on rather unevenly, or possibly it was not sewn quite firmly enough and had got loose and, as a result, the hammer was not facing upwards as it should but slightly sideways. You could catch anyone on this pretext, even the Minister of Defence himself. How can one possibly ensure that all buttons have their hammers unfailingly straight up? The captain then scrawled on the sergeant's pass in bold letters: 'Leave cancelled at 1604 hours, owing to crude violation of the rules of dress and for arguing with a patrol.' I wrote down the sergeant's name and unit number, and the offender saluted the captain and set off for his unit. Now the sergeant was completely defenceless since his pass was no longer valid and if he was stopped by another patrol on his way back to his unit he might be clobbered with 'absence without leave'.

We caught the first one in four minutes, so during the remaining 476 minutes we had to catch another fifty-nine.

'Comrade Private, you are breaking regulations on dress.'

'No, Comrade Captain, I am not.'

'Comrade Private, you are arguing with a patrol chief!'

'No, Comrade Captain, I am not arguing, I only wanted to say that I am not breaking regulations on form of dress.'

'Guards Officer-Cadet Suvorov!'

'Here!'

'Call the duty car - this is a serious offender!'

While my fellow cadet wrote down the name of the serious offender and the captain was catching yet another, I ran to the nearest telephone box. Yes, the sergeant was more experienced, he shut his mouth before uttering the second sentence, but the little soldier was still a bit green. And that is why you, my little darling, will be taken away with honour in a car any moment now. I ran back from the telephone and saw that, beside the serious offender, there already stood a pilot officer-cadet guilty of 'sloppy saluting'. Sixteen minutes of our tour of duty gone and three offenders already in the bag, I hoped it continued that way.

'Comrade Warrant-Officer, your peak is not two fingers from your eyebrows!'

'No, Comrade Captain, it's exactly two fingers.'

'You are arguing! Your papers!'

There was no time for boredom with our captain. He was a fine fellow and no mistake. But what was that there in the bushes? Surely it was a dead-drunk defender of the Motherland? It was indeed! There were some stunted shrubs between the street and the pavement, and in their midst had fallen an inebriated warrior. Tunic unbuttoned, right shoulder-strap torn off and chest, trousers and boots all covered in vomit, there he was, completely filthy, his cap long since vanished. We turned him over on to his back. Oh, what bad luck! He was an officer-cadet of our own beloved tank school, a guardsman like myself. We never lay a finger on one of our own. There is intense socialist competition between all units of the garrison! One cannot ever let down one's own school. Air force, artillery and all the others - be on your guard - but not one of our boys! He had just drunk a bit too much. Who doesn't do the same sometimes? A car, summoned from our school, took the drunken tankman away. He was not included in the statistics, of course, he did not count, and anyway he was taken home merely to prevent him from freezing to death or catching cold. You see, the ground was cold because it wasn't summertime.

'Comrade Lieutenant, you are breaking regulations on dress.' The lieutenant obediently kept silent. He was literate, this one.

'Your gloves, Comrade Lieutenant, are black, they should be brown!'

'Yes, you are right, I am guilty, Comrade Captain.'

'Papers!'

Our own captain's gloves were also black. Where can one possibly find brown gloves? Gloves are not issued to officers, because the industry does not in any case produce brown ones. Officers are given money to buy their own gloves. Buy them yourselves, but unfortunately there is nowhere to buy them. I repeat, Soviet industry does not produce any brown gloves. Anyone who has served in Germany would have bought at least twenty pairs, a life-time's supply. And anyone who has never served in Germany is prey to the patrols. Before going on duty, all officers are issued personally by Colonel Yeremeyev with a pair of brown leather gloves for which they sign, to wear, temporarily, while on duty. But these gloves are so well worn, tattered and out of shape, that it would be indecent for an officer to wear them. This is why our captain immediately took them off and folded them tidily and put them in his pocket. God forbid that he should lose them!

'And why are you breaking the regulations, Comrade Lieutenant. Does an order of the Minister of Defence not concern you?'

'I am sorry.'

'You may go!'

'Right!'

This lieutenant's name also graced our book of statistics. When the time comes for the lieutenant to enter the academy, the top brass will look at his personal file. Oh, heavens, he has been stopped by patrols a hundred times in one year and on each occasion for the same violation! He is incorrigible! He should be locked up! And you recommend him for the academy! Use your brains, man!

'Comrade Senior Lieutenant, you are breaking regulations on dress . . . Your gloves are black. Or maybe you did not read the order of the Minister of Defence? Well then, why do you break it? Is it deliberate? Does it spring from a love of violating rules?' The captain took off one of his own black gloves and wrote down in his black book the name of the senior lieutenant.

There were two hours and seventeen minutes left before we were to be relieved. There were sixty-one offenders in the black book. In the darkness, obviously quite oblivious to us and humming something under his breath, a dead-drunk artilleryman was staggering all over the place and our captain somehow managed not to notice him.

'Request permission, Comrade Captain, to arrest this God of War.'

'Oh no, let him be, he's in the 62nd and always remember this, Suvorov, the target must be passed, but only minimally. This is the law of our life. It's time you understood that norms are scientifically based and verified many times over by life itself. In a couple of months, we will be on patrol again, and then they'd make it not 60 but 65 or even as many as 70 offenders. And you just go and try making it 70. The existing norms are the direct result of the work of the ninnies like you who tried too hard to overreach the target, and now these same ninnies are themselves being caught by patrols, that's what.'

The lucky artilleryman, quite without noticing us, staggered off. If all the patrols in his path had already slightly overshot their targets, he might quietly drift along right through town along all the main streets, drunk, unbuttoned and dirty with that fixed insolent, intoxicated expression on his face. Meanwhile, the number of drunken and half-drunk soldiers, officer-cadets and sergeants continued to grow. The vast majority had long since cottoned on to the advantages of the planned system and hid their faces until evening. The feeling was that control weakened simultaneously in all districts of the town. All patrols tried to fulfil their plans as soon as possible in order to insure themselves against the 'bigger round', and that was why everything had changed. The most experienced villains and alcoholics used this 'release of tension' for their own, far from noble, purposes. From 2400 hours onwards, all of them, even those who were paralytically drunk, put their tails between their legs precisely because they knew that the

stupidest, most inept patrols, for whom a whole day was not even long enough to catch anybody, were now out on the prowl.

In spite of the growing flood of real offenders, drunks and hooligans, we had absolutely nothing to do and here we were sitting on a bench under the bare leafless willows. The captain instructed us on the tactics of the German tank forces. After all, the passing-out examinations were not very far off.

'Tactics, brothers, are the most complicated subject on earth. But just tell our generals that tactics are more complicated than chess and they laugh their heads off, they simply don't believe it. But it's really no laughing matter. Chess is the crudest form, the most superficial model of a battle between two armies and the most primitive of armies at that. In all other respects, it's exactly like war. A king is helpless and lacks mobility but his loss signifies complete defeat. A king is the exact personification of headquarters staff, cumbersome and lacking in mobility - so just destroy them and it's checkmate. The queen is the intelligence service, in the fullest sense of the word - an all-powerful and invincible intelligence service, capable of acting independently with lightning speed, and thwarting the enemy's plans. Knight, bishop and castle require no commentary. The likeness is very great, especially when it comes to the cavalry. Think of the battle of Borodino and the cavalry raid carried out by Uvarov and Platov on Bonaparte's rear. That was 'knight's gambit' for you in both meaning and form. Just you look at the map! The Russian cavalry neither fought nor charged, but simply appeared in the rear and that was that, but their appearance stopped Bonaparte from sending his guard into battle. And in many respects this one move decided both the battle and the whole destiny of Russia. And that was knight's gambit for you.

'A contemporary battle,' continued the captain 'is a thousand times more complicated than chess. If you want to model a small contemporary army on a chess-board, the number of chess-men, with all kinds of different capabilities will have to be sharply increased. Somehow, you will need to designate tanks, anti-tank rockets, anti-tank artillery and artillery, pure and simple, an air force including fighters, low-flying attack planes, strategic bombers, air transport and helicopters - you just can't list them all ... and all demand a united plan, a united strategy and the closest possible co-ordination. Our misfortune, and the main difference between us and the Germans, consists in our habit of counting our bishops and pawns, with total disregard for their competent deployment. And, you know, the Germans started the war against us with a paltry three thousand tanks against our eighteen thousand. Now, we propound many different versions, but we refuse to accept the main conclusion, which is that German tactics were much

more flexible than ours. Mark my words - if something happens in the Near East, we will be smashed to smithereens; they won't give a damn for quantitative and qualitative superiority. What's the good of having three queens, if you don't know how to play chess? And our advisers simply cannot play, and that's a fact. Look at the Head of Faculty, Colonel Soloukhin, just back from Syria

'But how so?' I could not refrain from asking.

The captain looked at me and then slowly said: 'It's the system itself that's at fault.'

The answer obviously did not fully satisfy us and so he added, 'Firstly, our chiefs are appointed on the basis of their political qualifications, they don't know how the game is played or even wish to learn how to play it but they're ideologically well-groomed. Secondly, our system demands the rendering of accounts, reports, and achievements. Upon this we stand! The reports which announced the destruction of thousands of German tanks and aircraft during the first days of the war were so phoney that the political leadership of the country changed to quoting territorial indices instead, as being more convincing. This gave birth to reports of the capture of towns and mountain tops and such like. But you just try playing chess without annihilating the enemy's army, but by capturing his territory, regardless of your own losses! What will happen? The same as happened to us during the war. We won only because we showed no pity for millions of our own pawns. If our General Staff and military advisers take it into their heads to seize Israeli territory instead of first annihilating their army, it will cost us very dear indeed. Of course, the Jews won't achieve checkmate, but the annihilation of Israel by our tactics will still cost us dear. And it will be worst of all if, God forbid, we ever come up against China. In that case, our pawns won't help us at all because they have many more pawns at their own disposal.'

Here the captain spat angrily and kicked an empty tin can with the toe of his varnished boot. The can rolled along the dark pathway under the feet of a well-oiled sapper who was making advances to a young girl. The silent struggle in the darkness apparently reminded the captain that we were still on patrol. He yawned and abruptly changed the subject.

'Guards Officer-Cadet Suvorov, your conclusions please about today's patrol duty. Quickly!'

I was slightly taken aback.

'A tank commander must instantly evaluate the situation. Well? Your conclusions?'

'Uh-h, we arrested many offenders . . . Uh-h, we have improved discipline . . . thanks to you . . .' I tried, awkwardly, to interlace the flattery.

'You haven't a clue, Viktor, and you a future lieutenant, or don't you

want to understand ... or else you are just plain cunning. Listen - but it's only between the two of us. In a fully planned economy, terror also can only be a planned affair, i.e. absolutely idiotic and ineffective, this is the first point. Secondly, we have been working today according to the methods of the second five-year-plan, that is to say the methods of 1937 and 1938, the only difference being that we didn't actually arrest or shoot the offenders. Thirdly, if today the order were given to repeat the second five-year-plan, then not only the organs of State Security, but every armed man, even every ordinary Soviet citizen, would rush headlong to carry out this order: that is how we have been trained and we are ever ready. And fourthly . . . you and I too, Viktor, for that matter, are not insured against these bloody five-year-plans . . . we have absolutely no insurance ... If the order were given tomorrow, everything would start all over again - the Berias, the Yezhovs, the NKVD, etc . . . It's just that, for the present, we have a completely spineless General Secretary in charge . . . but only for the moment! But supposing he's replaced tomorrow? . . . What then? Okay, don't get upset, let's go .. . our tour of duty is over for today.'

'Comrade Captain, maybe after all we should drive off that sapper, otherwise he'll rape her, sure as eggs is eggs!'

'Tomorrow she'll complain, that it was a soldier, and on our patrol route too,' added my other comrade, hoping to give weight to my remark.

'But this is still no concern of ours,' he smiled, and pointed to the luminous dial of his watch. We smiled too - the watch showed 0004 hours.

Theatre

Before the arrival in Severodvinsk of Marshal of the Soviet Union Grechko, the high command of the Northern Fleet decided to paint the shore-line cliffs grey. In all, over twenty kilometres of coastline were painted. The sailors of two whole divisions and the men of a marines regiment laboured over this titanic work for several weeks and, in the process, used up the whole allocation of anti-corrosion paint supplied to the entire fleet for a whole year. The Minister liked the colour of the rocks, and from that time forth the painting of rocks before the arrival of a high-ranking commander became one of the more remarkable traditions of our Fleet.

Before the arrival of Marshal of the Soviet Union Chuikov at the Moscow Higher Combined Arms School, the School Commander decided to level up all the pine-trees along the 'Golden Kilometre' - the woodland road leading towards the school - using caterpillar tank tractors.

Before the visit of Marshal of the Soviet Union Sokolov to the fifth Army of the Far Eastern Military District, more than 500 portraits of the Marshal were hung about the walls of the barracks of that Army's mobile rocket-technical base.

The history of our glorious army records tens of thousands of such examples, here I quote but a few of those seen with my own eyes. The system itself is to blame. That is how our army is organised. And don't think that it's only marshals who are greeted with such joy. Any major from a neighbouring division, who comes to make some check-up or other, is given the same hospitable reception. We are all trained to expect it and we cannot live otherwise. All is boiling energy, turbulent fantasy, and the rare qualities and abilities of the majority of all Soviet officers and generals are squandered on outdoing their competitors in the hospitality stakes. Rarely does one come across a general who is not keen on such displays. But our army is a huge one and exceptions do occur. I knew one such general, a free-thinker who considered the painting of grass with green paint, if not idiotic, then at least as not being his paramount task. The Head of the Tank Training School, Major-General Slukin never once appeared either at the tank training

ground, the armoured troop carrier training ground, or at the artillery range. Underwater tank manoeuvres, firing practice, the battle training of tank platoons and companies he considered as being work for dumb soldiers and an unnecessary waste of time. Our general was sold on culture and considered it his duty to implant in future officers something rather higher than mere military science.

At the same time it must also be said that, as a general rule, in Soviet military schools and academies, culture is neither cultivated, taught, nor implanted in any form. And it was this very gap that our chief tried to fill. The trouble was that his notions about culture were rather peculiar. He considered, for example, that a cultured man is only one who regularly goes to the theatre and that the number of such visits defines the degree of one's culture. Literature, painting, sculpture, architecture and so on were totally beyond the general's sphere of vision. The Theatre and nothing but the Theatre! It does not matter which, as long as it is a theatre. The general's only care was a register of personal attendances.

The life of an officer-cadet at tank school is exceptionally arduous. Anyone who has experienced, if only once, what it means to load forty-three projectiles into a tank, to change a tank-track (which weighs one and a half tons), or just to sit for three hours behind the controls of a T-55, will understand to the full what it is really like to spend four years at a tank training school. But, when all is said and done, the hardest ordeal of all for us was still the theatre. And we were obliged to attend it at least once a month. The whole school had to attend, to the joy of all those theatres which were going bankrupt and were usually never patronised by anybody. And, for this very reason, the Political Directorate of our Military District loved our general very much and always quoted him as an example; and it was no joke either as our school alone provided the district with 12,000 'man-attendances' per year. This was really something to be proud of, even if there was complete failure in all other areas.

Attendance was carried out herd-fashion, in formation, with colours flying and music playing. In front of the theatre, the general assembled the whole school (a thousand officer-cadets) at attention and yelled his instructions into a megaphone so loudly that they could be heard three blocks away. 'Inside the theatre . . . No spitting on the floor! No spitting in the corners! This is a theatre! Don't blow your noses on your sleeves! Use your handkerchieves! . . . And most important ... No swearing! I expressly forbid it! If I hear any at all, I will put you on a charge! This is a theatre!'

When we marched to the theatre for the first time, thousands of people came running out to feast their eyes upon the spectacle of these

dashing defenders of the Motherland - these future officers. But after they had heard the loudly-shouted instructions, they did not know where to look for the shame of it. We meanwhile were all standing to attention, not daring to move a single muscle. The rumours about us soon spread throughout the town. Formerly, no tank officer-cadet was known in the town otherwise than as 'Guderian' after the German tank commander, but now we earned for ourselves a new honorary title - 'Snotty' - and the name stuck. No sooner did any officer-cadet appear anywhere, than there were shouts of 'Don't blow your nose on your sleeve'. Attendances at the theatre continued, accompanied by the obligatory instructions. But now, when people heard the roll of the drums and the measured tread of our boots, they fled instantly, expressly in order not to witness this disgraceful spectacle.

One night, after the usual theatre visit, I was awakened by my friend Genka Bulakov. It was probably two o'clock in the morning but the lad simply could not get to sleep, in spite of the accumulated tiredness of the previous week.

'Viktor! Please explain to me . . .'

'What do you want?'

'There is one thing I simply can't understand, I mean. . .our general . . . Of course, he is a cultured fellow, far better than other generals . . . But I cannot understand one thing. . . Why, every time, in front of the theatre, does he have to shout like that into his bloody megaphone? He could give us those instructions back at the school. What the hell does he have to shout at the top of his voice for? We know his instructions by heart and so do all the locals.'

'In the old days it would have been considered an insult.'

'Pull the other one!'

'No. In the old days, he most certainly would have been challenged to a duel . . .'

'Go on! Do you think I never read Kuprin?*' I did, you know. But I still never came across any cases of cadets challenging generals to duels. Of course, it would not be a bad idea, at that, to challenge him to a duel and to shoot at him with armour-piercing shells. General he may be, and a cultured chap at that, but I bet he would fuck up shooting, on the move, with a low-energy release shell with double stabilisations. I would be the first to challenge him to a duel myself. . . But what you say is all tripe and never happened . . . and never could happen either.'

To tell the truth, I did not know for sure myself whom, and under what

*The descendant of a Tartar Khan, called Kuprya, Kuprin served as an infantry officer in the Tsarist army. He wrote several novels highlighting the negative sides of the private life of the officer corps. The most well-known and biased was his novel entitled *Duel*. After the Revolution, Kuprin lived as an emigre in France.

circumstances, one could challenge to a duel, and I had not come across any examples of such incidents in literature. So, then, I just expressed my own feelings.

'Of course, one could not challenge generals to duels over things of that kind, and I personally think it was because cultured generals did not exist in those days. None of the generals then was ever interested in the theatre, and that is why nobody challenged them to duels . . . The army only became cultured after the victory of Soviet power . . . It's a pity, though, that duels were forbidden then.'

'Yes, it's a pity,' mumbled Genka, falling asleep.

Part Two

Operation 'Dnieper'

On the day after our passing-out evening celebration, all two hundred of us young lieutenants, the latest graduates of the Kharkov Guards Tank Commander School, were formed up on the parade ground and an order from the Minister of Defence concerning our re-training for our new battle techniques was read out to us. Usually, after passing-out celebrations, young officers are given a month's leave, after which time, in accordance with the Minister's order, they go to join their division or regiment and are thus scattered throughout the whole world, from Havana to South Sakhalinsk, wherever the Minister orders. And now this tradition of many years' standing had been broken, owing to the simple fact that a new tank, the T-64, had been introduced into service in the Soviet Army some few months before our graduation. Before our graduation, there had not been enough time for detailed study. As it was, our curriculum was already overloaded with other subjects. And so it was decided to re-train all young officers, but from one tank school only, rather than from all five; and not to distribute the re-trained officers over the whole vast expanse of our territory, but to confine them to those divisions and districts which are habitually re-armed first.

It should here be mentioned that the very newest battle technology is always introduced first to the troops of the second line of defence, that is to those of the Baltic, Byelorussian and Carpathian Military Districts, and most certainly not to the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany or to any other troops stationed abroad. New technology is only introduced in such places after five to eight, and sometimes more, years after its adoption in frontier districts. Our T-64 first appeared in Germany exactly ten years after it began to be mass produced. And at the time of the first mention in the West of this tank, as a new Soviet experimental tank, its mass production had in fact long since ceased altogether—it was being replaced by the new T-72s.

This system has several aims. First, it greatly increases secrecy and, in case of war, it puts the enemy at a great disadvantage. Secondly, it facilitates the sale of obsolete technology to our allies, from Poland to

the Arabs. In this way, the technology available to the Group of Soviet Troops in Germany can be made out to be of the very latest design.

Never before, at the introduction of a new tank into service, had young officers been kept back for re-training, which was formerly done at divisional level as a part of everyday service. This is understandable: all previous tanks, from the T-44 to the T-62, represent the continuation of one line of development, in that each successive model retained, in its construction, many elements possessed by the previous model, and, therefore, re-training was a comparatively uncomplicated process. Now, this line of development had been exploited to the full and the new T-64 was based on entirely new principles. Everything in it, from its general lay-out, to stabilizers, optics, signals and drive, was unusual and completely new, and, as it turned out later, also totally unreliable.

The study of the new techniques, equipment, electronics and tank's armament took four and a half months - from 1 June to 15 October, 1967. At the end of September, we had to take part in large-scale manoeuvres and to put into practice our newly-acquired skills and abilities. We had to postpone our leave until October.

The process of introducing new battle techniques into an army is always a secret. Draconian measures are taken to stop any details connected with this process from being leaked. Simultaneously, all official channels disseminate false information. For instance, at a parade, or during special show exercises, something which is absolutely contrary to actual practice may be demonstrated.

That same day, in the evening, as we stood to attention, an order was read out to us prohibiting young officers from wearing officers' uniform during re-training: only tank-crew overalls were to be worn. Tank-crew overalls in our army are standard issue and carry no badge or rank, with the result that a soldier is indistinguishable from an officer. This is an old tradition of ours, born of war. The order seemed merely to indicate a means of camouflage and there was nothing strange about that. The odd part emerged a bit later. It turned out that over a hundred re-engaged men, all instructor-drivers, were going with us. For a mere two hundred pupils, a hundred instructors were out of all proportion. Seventy would have been enough for the whole school, for all thousand officer-cadets. And yet they had assembled the school's entire complement of instructors, thus, for all practical purposes, arresting completely the whole training programme throughout the school; in addition to which, many more instructors had been sent directly from the Kharkov Malyshev Works, which officially produced railway locomotives and, unofficially, also tanks. The fact that instructors had been brought straight from the works was absolutely inexplicable. Clearly,

they must be desperately needed there, if mass production of a new tank had started.

A second inexplicable factor was that our own supervisors were not going with us. The teaching process normally proceeds as follows: a lieutenant colonel, the supervisor, explains the theory, after which instructor-sergeants, under his control, give practical instruction. But there were too many instructors and not a single supervisor!

A third surprise awaited us in the train itself. After our departure, a secret order was read out in all carriages, announcing the formation of the 100th Guards Tank Training Regiment. The Deputy Commander of the School, who read us this order, introduced to us the young Colonel of the newly-formed regiment. It was also announced that the regiment would have ninety-two battle tanks and nineteen battle-training tanks.

It was dead of night as the train wended its way along the track, making a lulling knocking noise on the rails. But no one was sleeping. And there was good reason for this: as a new regiment has been formed, then, a colour must be presented to it, the more so since it was a Guards regiment, all of which made the ceremony of the presentation of the colour all the more momentous. According to regulations, a new Guards colour must be received by the whole regiment on its knees, but, in this instance, nothing of the kind was happening. And, secondly, why so many tanks for a training regiment? Thirty to forty training tanks would have been quite enough, and battle tanks were not even needed in the first place.

On the sly, every kind of hypothesis, on what all this meant, was being advanced. Some suggested that we might be sent to the Arabs, where the situation was daily worsening with lightning speed.

'It would be great, brothers, to go abroad at least once in our lifetime. To Poland or even to the Egypt place.'

'A hen is not a bird and Poland is not abroad! But to visit the GDR or Egypt, that, of course, would be interesting. Only now, with this new T-64, we will not be going abroad for five years at the very least.'

'Perhaps we really are going to help the Arabs?'

'They don't need any help! Did you read how many tanks they have? Well! . . . And which type . . . know what I mean? ... Of course, they're not T-62s, but neither are they Shermans like those used by the Jews.'

'And they also have thousands of our advisers and all the war plans are worked out by our own General Staff.'

'Oh! They'll knock hell out of the Jews. I even feel sorry for them.'

'Better pity their poor balls! Pity, my foot!'

'How long will the war last?'

'Three to four days - no more than that. It shouldn't take long to

overrun the whole of Israel with tanks. The Jews are surrounded on all sides and, if the war does drag on for a week, they'll have to surrender. As they'll be surrounded on all sides and blockaded by sea, they'll soon run out of food!

'But I heard, lads, that the Arabs are bloody awful soldiers!'

'Do you think the Jews are any better? They'll scatter at the first shots.'

'And that's a fact!'

'In America, they're already singing requiems for the Jews.'

'Don't be in too much of a hurry to celebrate victory. Unless the UN troops are recalled from their positions and stop separating Jews from Arabs, there won't be any victory at all.'

'Never mind, our people will cook up something in that case.'

'I hope the UN troops will be removed as soon as possible, and then the comedy can really start!'

'And the golden rain of orders and medals will pour down on the heads of our advisers! There won't really be a war. We will just overrun this Israel place with our tanks and there you are, we'll be heroes overnight.'

'What is there to overrun anyway, the whole of Israel is smaller than one of our larger firing grounds!'

At this, everybody burst out laughing, although it was really no joke. In the Soviet Union, there are indeed many army firing ranges which exceed in size not only Israel but also some of her warlike neighbours into the bargain.

'And now go to sleep, lads!'

'Oh, we graduated too late. At least half those who graduated from our school last year were sent to the Arabs as advisers. Even at this minute, they're probably making holes in their tunics for the medals they're bound to receive. That's the only real preparation needed for a war like this!'

Next night, in the pouring rain, we disembarked at a small country station somewhere in the Chernigov Province. A column of lorries covered in with tarpaulins was waiting for us. After another three hours, in the haze which precedes dawn and in the midst of the warm mist, we disembarked once again close to our tents, in the forest.

What we saw before us at daybreak both surprised and puzzled us. The sight recreated visions of Batyy's* hordes at the time of his last stand before the gates of Kiev. As far as the eye could see, along the length of the forest clearings, stood the serried ranks of green tents. Here and there, small glades could be seen, and beyond them there

*A famous Tartar Khan.

were endless rows of marquees hidden under camouflage netting. Canvas, canvas, canvas stretching to the horizon and beyond in all directions. There were tens and maybe even hundreds of thousands of people: artillerymen, rocket men, anti-aircraft gunners, combat engineers, infantry men and commandos. Where the hell were we? What was this army all around us and what was its purpose?

Just behind us were the regular canvas rows belonging to some motorised infantry regiment — probably a show regiment, or so-called 'court regiment', where all the soldiers speak only Russian. All infantrymen invariably possess insolent faces as well as insolent tongues.

'Did you hear, brothers, about the new decree, that new coins are to be minted to celebrate the Anniversary of Soviet Power?'

'Yes, we heard!'

'We must lay in a stock of these coins - after the new revolution, these coins will be very valuable.'

Whereupon, unanimous laughter exploded from the infantry's smoking quarters.

In our life, we hear anti-Soviet remarks every day and at every turn. But, never before had we ever heard conversation of this type carried on so blatantly and in front of such a large assembly of strangers. During breakfast, we decided to send a small delegation to the infantry to explain to them, cautiously, that we were not simple soldiers but were in fact officers, only without our insignia of rank. In this way, we could suppress, at the very start, all attempts at familiarity.

I was on that delegation. The infantry greeted us with enthusiastic cries of welcome.

The armour is strong and our tanks are fast, and our men - ah, our men, there is no need to speak of them!*

The infantry salute the tank men!'

'Give the tank men something to drink!' ordered a tall, slender soldier. Whereupon about thirty soldiers' flasks stretched out from all sides in our direction. But we were in a serious mood and turned down their invitation. Have you ever seen any officer drinking with soldiers and lance-corporals?

'Comrades,' Lieutenant Okhrimenko, the head of our delegation began severely, 'although we have no badges of rank, we are none the less officers!'

This remark was greeted by a friendly roar of laughter.

'And who do you think we are?'

'We also are officers!'

'Only wearing soldiers' shoulder-straps!'

*A quotation from a soldiers' song.

'May we introduce ourselves, the Kiev Higher All-Arms Commanders School. Two hundred freshly baked lieutenants!'

'On your right are graduates of the Poltava Higher Anti-Aircraft Artillery School - one hundred and eighty lieutenants in all.'

'And further down there is the Ryazan Higher Airborne Troops School.'

'So let's have a drink! After all!'

So we did.

'But, little falcons, what are you doing here?' we asked.

'It's known officially as re-training for new battle techniques but unofficially as a "big show" in honour of the glorious jubilee of our beloved Soviet Power.'

We drank some more. It doesn't go down too well in the morning but, nevertheless, we knocked it back.

So that was it! A grandiose spectacle was being organised in honour of the fiftieth anniversary, and we were taking part in it. We were to provide the crowd scenes for the film.

'It's going to be ballet like no one's seen before. And there'll be more troops than ever before.'

'Every kind of secret technology will be on display.'

The front-line troops will be two divisions made up entirely of young officers and instructors. The back-up divisions will be manned by officer-cadets in their last year, all men within five minutes of becoming officers.'

There'll be specially selected soldiers, just to raise a cloud of dust on the horizon and create the illusion of vast numbers.'

'And we were told that it was a re-training exercise!'

'So were we! And we've been given a wonder-machine, the Infantry Battle Machine, the BMP-1, you may have heard about it?'

Our spirits fell abruptly, in spite of the amount of vodka we had drunk. For we knew only too well what a show turn-out is like, and what the training involves, especially for one designed to fete such a great jubilee.

That same night, the first sub-units of the 120th Guards Rogachev Motorised Infantry Division, the 'court' division of the Commander of the Byelorussian Military District, started to arrive in camp. Every district has something similar: in the Moscow district it is the 2nd Guards Taman' Motorised Infantry Division and the Kantemirov Tank Division, in the Carpathian District the 24th Iron Samaro-Ul'yanovsk Motorised Infantry Division, in Kiev the 41st Guards Tank Division. All these divisions exist solely for show. They only know parades, demonstrations, solemn visits by foreign guests, guards of honour, and they have no battle training whatsoever. All these 'court' divisions - and

there are nine of them in the Soviet Army - are absolutely incapable of fighting. But they are kept always at full strength, with 12,000 men in each, which represents 108,000 of the very best soldiers and officers in all the Soviet land forces. And on this occasion, for this unparalleled peep-show, it was found necessary to reinforce even the 'court' divisions with newly-fledged officers as well.

Next day, the reforming of troops intended for the main action was carried out. Somewhere, near at hand, was located the field headquarters of the 38th Army. For Operation 'Dnieper', the composition of this army was strengthened by the addition of the 41st Guards Tank, the 79th, 120th, 128th Guards Motorised Infantry and the 24th Iron Motorised Division, the N-rocket brigade, the N-Guards artillery brigade, the N-anti-aircraft rocket brigade, the N-tank destroyer artillery regiment and the many other support sub-units including an army mobile rocket-technical base, an army mobile anti-aircraft rocket base, two liaison regiments, a pontoon-bridge regiment, as well as some sapper and CW battalions. In addition, several motorised infantry battalions representing penal battalions were included. The use of these battalions either in war or during training requires neither knowledge nor practice: the Army Commander merely hurls them into the very thick of battle, where artillery is useless, or into those areas which have not been reconnoitred. As a general rule, such battalions are deployed for one battle only. For the next battle there are other battalions, composed of other shtrafniki.* On this particular occasion, separate motorised infantry battalions were recruited not from shtrafniki but from young officers, wearing soldiers' uniform.

Alongside our 38th Army, a further three armies were being raised. Taken together, the four armies represented the 1st Ukrainian front, itself a part of the 'Eastern' forces.

On the right bank, the 'Western' forces were forming up. Troops and battle armaments continued to pour in. Every day, every night, every hour. During preparations for Operation 'Dnieper', the Soviet Army, to all intents, completely lost its combat preparedness. Judge for yourself. To build up only one show division, over 10,000 officers were required - because officers were cast in the role of ordinary soldiers. And where can such a multitude be gathered? Even every graduate from every military school and academy would not have been sufficient. And, for this reason, it was decided in addition to call upon the majority of the officers of the Baltic, Byelorussian, Kiev and Carpathian

*Members of penal battalions, virtually condemned to certain death by the impossible nature of the task allotted to them.

military districts. I repeat: each of these districts forms an army group. Now, just imagine four of the largest groups of armies, utterly devoid of officers. What does one do with all those soldiers? But don't panic. Four army groups represent twelve to fifteen armies. That's not really so many, after all. Five Soviet armies in Germany, that's certainly a vast number of troops, but fifteen armies spread over the entire territory of the Soviet Union is not a lot, because these armies are all 'Kadriro-vannye'* or, as we prefer to call them amongst ourselves, 'Kastriro-vannye'*** many officers, lots of armament, but basically held in reserve as they have so few soldiers. As the saying goes, when the war starts, we will soon round up the peasants and throw them straight into battle. It doesn't matter that they've never even seen such weapons. They'll soon learn! Provided they're not all killed off first!

One army at full strength means 60,000 to 65,000 men. So fifteen armies mean 900,000 to 975,000 men. And, even if these armies have only ten per cent of their complement of personnel during peacetime, that represents nearly 100,000 men. What do you do with them? Tell them to get busy digging up potatoes? The inherent danger of such a state of affairs is that the frontier districts possess the biggest adjunct of battle technology, more powerful and more up-to-date than what is available to Soviet occupation forces. In peacetime, frontier districts are very considerably under strength and are not, in essence, on a war footing. But, after mobilisation, according to Soviet practice, troops of these same districts must be superior to troops of the first echelon in both strength and in the quality of their armament.

On the eve of the great jubilee, mobilisation in these, and indeed some other, districts proved impossible owing to the absence of a basic nucleus around which the mobilisation process could be carried out. In the event of a sudden attack by the enemy, the Soviet Army would lose a colossal amount of its first-class armament and would be unable to call upon its basic striking force. Such short-sighted treatment of second-echelon troops bears witness once more to the fact that no one on the General Staff believes in the possibility of a sudden attack from NATO forces.

1967, the year of the great fiftieth anniversary, was also the year of a record harvest. Few people ever bother to ask themselves why these good harvests happen at all. But the key is quite simple. We have record harvests every year, only there is nobody to gather them in. But, if there is a chance of throwing into the business of collecting the harvest the army, students, schoolboys and girls, intellectuals,

*When only officers and technical cadres are at full strength.

***'Castrated' rather than 'skeleton'.

etc., there you are, the harvest is a record. The army plays a major role at harvest time, not because soldiers want to work more than students, but because the army brings its own machines. So, in the year of the endless peep-show, it was possible to deploy not hundreds of thousands, but millions, of soldiers in gathering the harvest. They were used also in building work and in industry in general, and, of course, to ensure our own little piece of theatre - that is to say, our famous training exercise.

Have you ever seen tanks moving under water? It is a phenomenon easily described. Through a pipe installed on the tank turret, the air passes into the battle section, and then on into the engine. Exhaust gases are expelled by the engine straight into the water. Before going into the water, the driver fixes a setting by means of a special device known as a hydro-compass on some marker on the opposite bank. Under water, the needle of this device points permanently towards the marker. In addition, a command post is mounted on the bank, which watches the movement of every pipe above water level and, in case of emergency, can give directions: '212th, keep left, still more left, fuck you . . .!' If the engine stops, divers will hook cables on to the tank and the tractors which are waiting on the bank will haul the tank out of the water. That is all there is to it, the entire science! The trouble is that a tank, regardless even of its great weight, is nevertheless a reservoir for air. And its grip on the bottom, under water, is considerably less than on dry land, and a river bed is not an evenly rolled and flat surface. That is why driving under water requires great practice. If the steering lever is pressed only a fraction too much, the tank can turn through ninety degrees, exactly as would happen on a concrete road. Indeed, this can happen to a tank even on a concrete surface. Remember, in Czechoslovakia, how many of them were lying about in the gutters. It is quite pointless trying to explain to any soldier that, under water, it is better not to touch a single lever, if the tank is not moving straight, just to spit on it, and if you must touch any levers, then turn them as little as possible. Later on, I came across one fairly sensible soldier, who could even understand Russian quite tolerably, and he drove a tank around underwater for an hour and ten minutes, while crossing a little river about thirty metres wide. At the beginning, he turned the tank to face down-stream and, when he was ordered to turn it just a little to the right, he moved it through 180 degrees to face up-river.

Having done this over and over again for some eighteen turns, eventually he emerged from the river on the same bank from which he had started his epic journey. During the 'Dnieper' exercises such epics were of course taboo and, for this reason, all sensible soldier-drivers were replaced by instructors and officers.

But the Dnieper is a great Ukrainian river, it is not the Vorskla or the Klyaz'ma, and the Dnieper had to be crossed not by mere tank battalions but by four whole armies, one of which was a tank army. (At that time, every all-arms army possessed 1,285 tanks, and a tank army 1,332 tanks, without counting any of the floating reconnaissance tanks.) The entire armada of 5,187 tanks had to cross to the other bank of the Dnieper in a strictly limited time. And the whole performance before the very eyes of the Politburo itself, to say nothing of the distinguished foreign guests!

Tanks belonging to the other advancing fronts simply crossed by bridges. Such things are permissible while there are no foreign observers actually to see what is going on. But in full view of the government observers the tanks had not only to travel under water, but they had also to tow artillery pieces in their wake. And if something were to go wrong? What if one of the tanks suddenly started dancing about under water? In that case, the simple use of instructors and officers would not be enough, even more essential precautions would be necessary. And in the end a solution was found. While the officers were undergoing training, thousands of soldiers were literally paving the bed of the Dnieper. Thousands of tons of steel armature and steel mesh were laid on the river bed at the crossing points. At the same time, concrete panels were placed along the sides of the steel mesh to form barriers, like crash barriers on a motorway. The steel mesh on the river bottom provided the tanks with a more reliable grip, and the concrete barriers prevented them from straying from the path. The tanks trundled across as if they were in a furrow. And no less than a hundred such furrows were constructed. Only God knows how much steel, concrete and human labour was wasted in the process. The structure took many months to complete and the work was first class. The furrows were completely invisible from above. First of all, the tank simply went down under water, only then manoeuvred itself into the prepared corridor, and at the other bank emerged on the surface as if nothing had happened. Such tricks are, of course, absolutely impossible in wartime as the enemy would hardly allow you to spend four months splashing about in a river paving its bed. It would also be somewhat difficult to supply so many thousands of tons of building materials while under fire! But, in Operation 'Dnieper' it must be said, all the thousands of tanks crossed the river without incident, to the great astonishment of any uniformed observer.

But this is to anticipate. While I was engaged on the construction of these 'Potemkin' crossing points, I met my friend Yura Solov'yev, who had graduated from school one year before me.

'Yurka, damn your bloody eyes, it is really you?'

'Viktor! How are you you old bastard?'

'How are you? Where the hell have you been?'

'I'm all right. And it's the devil who's brought me to Byelorussia!'

'What dizzy height did you manage to reach?'

'Battalion commander! Do you remember Sashka Starkov?'

'Of course!'

'He's with me, as chief of staff. Private Abdukhmaev!'

'Yes, comrade Lieutenant!'

'Ask the battalion's chief of staff to come here!'

'Of course!'

'And you, Viktor, what's your rank?'

'Tank-crew gunner!' I reported, loud and clear.

We both burst out laughing. It was pure Chekhov, only one of us was not fat and the other thin, we were both young and slender.

Then Sashka Starkov came running towards us, and we embraced warmly.

'Well, Commander, shall we invite the gunner to have a drink?'

'Of course!'

We drank. And we drank. We were together again.

'Where are the rest of our lads? What news of everybody?'

'They're all with the Arabs. Our lads are getting the holes in their tunics ready for their new medals. Things'll start moving there any day now. And the others like you and me are getting ready for the glorious Operation "Dnieper"! They've rounded up all the officers from our regiment, every company, platoon and battalion - some of them as gunners and the others as loaders. There are only two officers left in the whole battalion. I'm the commander and Sashka is chief of the battalion staff! That's a fact. And it's the same thing in the regiment. A captain commands the regiment, and he has a couple of old men as his deputies. Ten officers in the whole regiment! All the rest are taking part here in your comedy!'

I sympathised with my friends. We were all lieutenants and we all got the same salary. But I had no responsibility at all, while they, being one year senior to me were battalion commanders and to make matters worse, commanders with no subordinate officers.

'How do you manage, brother, to keep that mob under control? Even when all the officers are at their posts there can't be any bloody discipline at all!'

They looked at each other.

'But we don't even try to keep up discipline. The triumvirate does it for us.'

'Really?'

Yes, indeed! In all divisions of the four districts, where the officers

had been seconded for the peep-show, field tribunals consisting of a commander, his political deputy and the divisional prosecutor had been created. And indeed the soldiers worked away diligently and conscientiously while their commanders were knocking back vodka in the bushes.

'You, Viktor, just pay us a call anytime. We've always got something put by for you!'

'And don't get too full of your own importance either, you may also be given command of a company after the peep-show, or even of a battalion. And then you'll know what it's like at the sharp end of being the commander! And we have nothing but this bloody peep-show the whole time!'

Nobody had a radio. Rumours were rampant, but in the main they spoke of victory.

'Our lot certainly showed them how! Thousands of Jewish tanks destroyed in a single day!'

Tales of thousands of Israeli tanks were heard at all levels - even the commander of a division gaily repeated them. It made me prick up my ears. I had been attentively reading the limited circulation magazine called *Military Matters Abroad* which was intended for officers' eyes only, and I knew perfectly well that Israel did not possess many thousands of tanks. Egypt - yes, but Israel - no! How then could our people possibly destroy a thousand, if a thousand never existed in the first place. Of course, we had destroyed all the Jewish tanks, but not thousands of them.

In the evening, a small spluttering radio receiver was unearthed at the infantry officers' quarters and we all rushed there to listen to it. As usual in infantry quarters, there was great animation. After a day spent in strenuous training, under the burning sun, they had recovered already and were slightly tipsy. A spirited song was issuing from their smoking area:

'This is a hammer and this is a sickle This is our Soviet
emblem Reap if you like or forge if you will Whatever
you do, you'll get fucked!'

Never before had I or any of my comrades come across such a centre of anti-Soviet feeling as in the Kiev Higher All-arms Commanders School which is named after Frunze. One does, however, encounter anti-Soviet feeling in the Soviet army at every step. Political anecdotes, songs and stories spread quickly and don't die down for a long time.

But I had never seen it so open before. Either they were not afraid of political informers, or the informers were also inclined towards free-thinking. I just do not know. The fact is that graduates from this particular school hold the record in the Soviet army for the largest number of flights to the West. Regardless of the difference between our shoulder-straps, we maintained the closest contact with them. I personally retain the pleasantest memories of them, and I am sure that if they had been in Novocherkassk at the time of those bloody events* they would not have lifted a finger against their own people. Unfortunately I cannot say the same about my own comrades, the tank men.

'Quiet, you bastards, it's working.'

After some preliminary hissing the radio started: 'Comrade Brezhnev met today in the Kremlin . . . News from the fields ...'

'You mark my words . . . there's been a cock-up there. Our advisers gave too much bloody advice!'

'Shut up, you bloody prophets.'

But the radio was in no hurry to report our victory in the Near East and the capture of Tel Aviv.

'. . . Towards the glorious jubilee . . . '

'I tell you, brothers, that it's all a lot of bullshit.'

'. . . The oilmen of the Tartar ASSR, after long hours . . . '

'Is it really true . . . ?'

'. . . News from abroad ...'

'SILENCE!'

'. . . Today Comrade Fidel Castro ...'

Nobody could stand it any longer and a flow of the most obscene abuse was hurled in the direction of that bearded hero.

'. . . Events in the Near East . . . Fierce battles . . . Heroic resistance by Arab troops . . . Gaza ... El Arish . . . Solidarity ...'

The information was short and absolutely incomprehensible. Neither figures nor facts were given. The main problem was who knew where El Arish was situated, on whose territory, and how far from the frontier.

'Who's got a map?'

'Shall we take an armoured personnel carrier into the village? There's a globe in the school.'

'Go on then! Let's get it!'

'Arish is a Jewish name and El is Arab.'

'I'm telling you that if they said the word "solidarity", that's the end! The bloody end!'

*The 'bloody events' mentioned here refer to the ruthless suppression by tanks and machine-guns of the local population in 1962.

'What bloody end? Do you really believe that they can possibly destroy all our tanks?'

'Of course not! But the fact that our people didn't capture the capital which is close to the frontier on the very first day means that it won't be captured tomorrow either.'

'Belt up! I'll bet ten bottles of vodka that our people will capture Tel Aviv tomorrow! Don't you know how many tanks the Arabs have? How much artillery? And aircraft? And the quality of the armament? Don't you know that every Soviet internal district is totally without tanks and artillery because it was all sent to the Arabs? There's not a single officer in the frontier areas at present because they're all at the peep-show. And the internal areas haven't got officers or armament, because it's all with the Arabs as well! Can you imagine how many thousands of our officers and generals are there? There's no space left to spit without hitting an adviser!'

'You can piss off with all this talk about advisers. They're exactly like you and me, or like our battalion and division commanders. They're useless, they can't even conduct a training exercise properly. It's all show! God help us from getting entangled with China, then the shit would really hit the fan thanks to our peep-show.'

Eventually, the globe arrived and very small indeed it was. Neither El Arish nor Gaza was shown on it, and even Israel itself could only be located with great difficulty. Only the UAR and Syria were visible, threateningly covering a good slice of territory.

Our doubts and fears appeared so unfounded and unimportant that we all burst out laughing and promptly forgot the latest news and the war in the Near East. Clearly the superiority of the Arabs was undeniable, even on the globe.

Next day, however, once again there was no news about the annihilation of Israel and the capture of Tel Aviv. As usual it was confused and totally incomprehensible: 'Stubborn battles . . . heroic resistance . . .' and the names of some inhabited areas without any indication of where they were situated. In addition, there was a warning note about the Israeli air force bombing peaceful towns and villages as well as schools and hospitals. It made us all start thinking again. When peaceful people are being shot in Budapest or Novocherkassk, the radio never calls for 'solidarity', and suddenly here they were starting to mention peaceful Arabs. What did that signify?

'I told you that Tel Aviv wouldn't be captured by our advisers, even on the second day. I'm prepared to bet it won't happen. Nor tomorrow either. If our people were on the outskirts, that would have been announced immediately. But, for now, it's a very far cry indeed from Tel Aviv. Of course, in a week or so it'll be captured anyway, but our

Chief of the General Staff ought to be put on trial for such bad planning.'

'He's a fornicating old fool, Comrade Zakharov.' And it was certainly very difficult not to share such an opinion.

'Maybe our people have thought up some trick? Maybe they'll try to decoy the Jews on to our territory and then cut them down with lasers!'

'Why the hell bother to cut them down with lasers if we already possess thousands of tanks, and what tanks!'

T-54s and T-55s. Not those prehistoric Jewish Shermans.'

'We've got overall superiority in both quality and quantity, so why not destroy them with tanks and be done with it?'

'I tell you, lasers would be better!'

'Why are you so keen on lasers? There's no such thing!'

Just take a look around you! All kinds of fireworks have been gathered together here in our camp for the big show - T-64s and BMPs and BRDM-2s and Shilkas and Luna-Ms - but there aren't any lasers to be seen. And if our General Staff can't deal with two divisions of antediluvian Shermans, what on earth will we do with the Bundes-wehr? And with the British Chieftains? Shall we put all our trust in lasers? Then why the hell are we as happy as billy-goats about the T-64? And what the bloody hell are we all doing here anyway?

'I must tell you one thing, brothers, it's a pissy tank!'

'I quite agree.'

Our first introduction to the T-64 tank had taken place before we graduated from our military school, when the first machine, all wrapped in tarpaulin, was brought in at night and hidden away in a hangar. It was a very fleeting acquaintance but, from the very first look, we all liked the 125 mm gun. It was the most powerful gun in the world and no tank had ever had anything like it before. Because of its amazing initial velocity, its shells could tear away the turrets of tank-targets and hurl them a distance of about ten metres (tank turrets weigh eight or even twelve tons).

But now, upon closer acquaintance, our delight with the T-64s had begun gradually to fade. The gun was certainly all-powerful but, in their endeavour to increase the initial velocity of the shell, the designer had made it not rifled, but smooth-bored, as in the T-62, and this immediately adversely affected its accuracy. In fact, it was an all-powerful gun, which always missed the target.

The tank's tracks were also based on entirely new principles. Before, tracks had to be changed after every 2,000 kilometres and now they could stand 10,000. The only trouble was that they constantly fell off. Imagine a boxer whose trunks fall down when the moment comes for a decisive punch. And, finally, the engine itself was not only bad, it was

disgusting. Several teams of workers and engineers, and a gang of designers, were sent along simply to maintain our one tank regiment. But they could not hope to solve problems arising from the engine's design, try as they might.

The latest news bulletin next day put an end to all doubts. In a cheerful voice, the announcer informed us of a decisive defeat suffered by the Israeli aggressors in the area of El Kantara and the Mitla Heights.

At last everything became clear. If the Jews were being called the aggressors that meant that they had already taken a solid slice of territory from the Arabs. There could be no other interpretation. The announcer had somehow completely forgotten that, between the Israeli and Arab armies, stood the UN troops, and that Israel alone could not have jumped over them or demanded that they be removed. So how, then, had she become the aggressor?

Mention of Mitla Heights and El Kantara raised the curtain on everything that had been passed over in silence on the radio. From our course in the history of the art of war, we all knew the whereabouts of Mitla and El Kantara. It was clear to us, but not to our divisional commander. Major-General Moskalev had studied the history of the art of war a long time ago and he didn't know where the places were; he believed that our people were destroying the Jews wholesale and that, if not by tomorrow, then at least by the day after tomorrow, the final victorious communique would be issued.

In such situations neither officers nor generals unless they are directly involved in events receive any additional information. I do not even bother to mention common soldiers, sergeants and mere civilians. Everybody else listens to the radio and reads Pravda and has to make do with that. During my long service in the Soviet army I never had any connection with the war in Vietnam and, therefore, all my knowledge of events there was based on Pravda leaders and rumours. Officers who were not involved in events in Czechoslovakia did not have the slightest idea about the scandalous breaches of the law and the crude mistakes committed during the preparations for and execution of that disgraceful operation. I was in Czechoslovakia but my knowledge of events there and my battle experience spring only from what I myself saw. There is never any examination, let alone revelation, of mistakes, after such measures have been carried out. It is not surprising, therefore, that the same mistakes in strategy, tactics, organisation and management and guidance of troops are being repeated over and over again year after year. It is hardly astonishing either that the majority of officers have very confused notions about what we are likely to face in any future war and what we must really prepare ourselves for. It is still less astonishing that the majority of Soviet tank corps, who, of course,

have never been in Sinai, are convinced that a Soviet tank is invincible, just as the majority of Soviet pilots, except those who served in Vietnam, are convinced that it was the Americans, and not ourselves, who suffered colossal casualties in the air battles there (as publicised in Pravda's daily reports).

Although the news over the following days was cheerful and almost victorious in tone, it no longer held out the hope of a speedy destruction of Israel. 'The peoples of the World demand an end to aggression . . . Workmen of the Likhachev works call it a disgrace . . . Conference of the Security Council . . . Speech by the Soviet representative . . . Peoples of the World must strengthen their solidarity . . . Liberate occupied territories . . .' And so on and so forth.

Then a sealed letter from the Central Committee of the Party was sent to all communists, and read out at closed Party meetings. Its fundamental leitmotiv was: 'The Arabs are poor fighters: they were busy saying their prayers when they should have been repelling attacks.'

But there was no secret letter for officers. There was a war on, mistakes were made, but, as is well known, one learns from one's own mistakes. But what exactly was the cause of defeat, and which exactly were the mistakes made, all this remained an impenetrable secret to us. The explanation to the effect that Arabs are poor soldiers was highly popular with generals, officers, soldiers and civilians. All interest in the campaign immediately subsided. Incidentally, the overwhelming majority of Soviet military advisers, from generals down to lieutenants, also shared the same point of view: 'Poor fighters' - full stop! And somehow the thought never entered anyone's head that we had known beforehand that they were poor fighters. And that, if we did know, why the devil did we demand the removal of the UN troops, who were protecting these poor fighters? If we knew to begin with that they were not fighters, then why did we spend billions of roubles, and lose thousands of tanks and aircraft, for nothing? If we knew beforehand that Arabs are inclined to pray at certain hours of the day when they should be fighting, then why were measures not taken? There should have been much foaming at the mouth in the Central Committee, to prove that there must not be a war and that the problem must be solved peacefully and that the UN troops must not be removed. But maybe the Soviet General Staff did not know what the Arab army was really like. In that case, such a General Staff and its Chief Intelligence Administration are not worth a kopek of anyone's money. How many years had thousands of colonels been kept in Egypt and Syria and still it had not dawned on us that the Arabs were not ready for war, in spite of the billions spent on first-class equip-

ment and on Soviet advisers? We were too busy counting the numbers of tanks and aircraft. On paper it all looked infallible.

After another whole week a top secret order came addressed to officers: 'About the lessons learned in military action in the Near East.' To this day I remember that order with mixed feelings of shame and indignation. The order of the Minister of Defence repeated, almost word for word, the text of the closed letter of the Party Central Committee. 'Disgrace to the aggressors . . . Arabs prayed, but did not fight ...' And that was all, not another word. No reference to the casualties on both sides, to innovations in Israeli tactics and armament, not one word about our mistakes. So why this order was top secret in the first place no one knows to this very day. It could safely have been printed in Red Star instead of the editorial. In fact foreign broadcasts went into far greater detail. In the evening, we tank crew members, with a good few drinks under our belts, were discussing this order with the other young infantry officers. 'One should not blame the mirror if one has an ugly mug.' 'Were the Arabs not taught in our military academies?' 'In the Arab armies absolutely everything was the same as in ours: organisation, armament, tactics and even peep-shows were identical.' 'Some day it will all cost us very dear!' 'If only we had given them the T-64 and the BMP-1!' 'You're a fool, but don't be offended just because I tell you that they had overwhelming superiority in both quantity and quality!'

'Now all the advisers will probably be turfed out of the army, their shoulder-straps will be torn off, and some of them will even be put on trial ...'

'Don't be offended, Viktor, but you're an idiot. Didn't you read the letter? The Arabs are not good fighters, didn't you understand that? Consequently, our advisers are good fighters! Before the week is over they'll all be getting medals and promotion. If our advisers were to be put on trial, so would the Chief of our General Staff. And the Minister of Defence must be kicked out too, as well as the Minister for Foreign Affairs, because of their policies, and perhaps somebody even higher up because of waste, stupidity and short-sightedness, and for his inability to direct the army, the country and its foreign policy.'

And, indeed, before that week was over, secret decrees from the Praesidium were signed awarding decorations to the Soviet military advisers. The decrees themselves were kept secret so as not to reveal the number of advisers or the number of posts occupied by them. But, in reality, secrecy was also maintained just to protect the new heroes from being jeered at by the West. There were thousands of names on the rolls, colonel-generals, major-generals, lieutenant-generals, majors, col-

onels, lieutenant-colonels. It was a wearying business listening to thousands of names in the heat of a June day.

On that same day, another order was read out in our regiment concerning the replacement of the T-64 by the T-55; by our dear old 'Fifty-fives', which we knew by heart, which we loved and which we dreamt about; the 'Fifty-fives', whose tracks never fell off and which possessed, if not that extraordinary fire-power, at least reliability and precision: those same 'Fifty-fives' which constitute the very foundation of tank troops in the Soviet Army and in the armies of its allied powers.

It is difficult to say why this decision was taken. Was it in order to hide the T-64 from the defeated Arabs, who might have complained that they had not been provided with them, or was it from fear that, during some training exercises, the engines and tracks might cause trouble. Probably both these factors played their part. In any case, the T-64s were taken away from us. They reappeared only after training, at a closed parade with no foreign guests present. They managed to cross the flat concrete without incident . . .

Meanwhile, the intensity of training increased. Each day, without rest days or leave periods, an unprecedented performance was being prepared, covering a huge territory. I do not know how many billion roubles it cost, but judge for yourself when the potential capacity of the T-55 is only 500 driving hours. After 500 hours, it must go in for a complete overhaul, and literally every part has to be changed, leaving only the hulk in which a new engine and new transmission must be installed, its whole running gear completely changed, all other apparatus, and so on . . . Then, the tank has another 250 hours of life, after which it is written off for good. A tank is not a tractor, it is too heavy and wears out very quickly. This is why the overwhelming majority of tanks spend all their life in moth-balls, waiting for war, and only the oldest of them, which have spent ten to fifteen years being preserved, are used for training. This is also why tanks are always transported in echelons or on trailers. Every hour in motion costs too much. Tanks are very rarely taken out of moth-balls and used for training. In the Soviet army there is a standard for battle tanks - 200 kilometres per year - and the General Staff, suspicious even of district commanders, watches the observance of this standard very closely. 200 kilometres per year means that if, in one year, a tank has done 400 kilometres, the whole of the previous year must have been spent in moth-balls. (If a divisional commander has used up the allocation in advance, he can be brought before the military tribunal.) And, all this does not even take into account the cost of technical maintenance as well as ammunition and fuel.

Now try to visualise the following picture: thousands of tanks, day

and night, taking part in training exercises without any notice being paid to motor resources, just as if it was a state of war. In wartime, this would have been entirely justified - that is why tanks are created, but what is the valid reason for throwing away billions of roubles in peacetime? During training, over a period of four months, our 38th Army completely ruined every one of its 1,285 tanks, and the same happened in all the other armies. One general replacement occurred before the main exercises started: all tanks, tracked armoured personnel carriers and gun-tractors were removed, and nearly new ones were distributed instead, so as to avoid breakdowns.

Twelve hours a day were dedicated to training: every movement at each stage of the coming exercises was worked out in the most minute detail. Only now did we understand how Suvorov's* principle, that 'each soldier must know his manoeuvre', is still applied in the Soviet army.

Preparations for the exercises were going on in one huge field set out with marker pegs. Every soldier (or disguised officer) studied his own task: jump down from the tracked armoured personnel carrier at this bush, move nine steps forward, give one burst of automatic gun-fire, thirteen steps forward and there's my target, another burst of fire, and there's the target of my right-hand neighbour, if he didn't hit it, I'll help him to do so, here the tank will fire armour-piercing shells - and again, and again.

These exercises seemed to have taken more than a whole year to work out, and when we arrived for our training everyone had been given a file with his role plainly indicated, not only every step but even every breath: seven steps forward, there will be a flash; hold breath: close eyes, put on gas mask, breath out; short burst of automatic gun-fire. It was the same for the infantry, for us, for the artillery corps, landing forces and everyone else: tank emerges from water, puncture the water-proofing on the gun barrel with an armour-piercing shot, throw off the pipe, remove the stopper from gun and turret, lower gun, now four hostile tanks will appear from behind that birch tree; concentrated fire by the whole company; my target is the far left tank, after having knocked it out, I shift my fire to the next target to the right and, if that one is also knocked out, I shift my fire still more to the right. . .

A week after our arrival in the camp everyone was obliged to pass an oral examination on each individual role: all the hours, minutes and

*A famous commander in the Tsarist army who, throughout his long career, never suffered a single defeat. The present writer is no relation.

seconds, when, where and what kind of target will emerge, distance towards it, its speed and angle of motion. Every one of the tens of thousands of people involved knew precisely in advance each action of the enemy, the composition of his forces and resources, and all his likely moves.

After this theoretical examination, practical training started. To begin with, each man, alone, went over the whole field, tidying up the smallest detail in his mind. At this juncture, anyone in the tank corps was on foot. After that, sections and crews started to be formed. There were four of us: the driver-instructor and three officers (the commander, gunner and loader). Once more we strode out across the field, a distance of ten to twelve kilometres.

Commander: 'Here I'll give the order Landmark - 2. 100 to the left, tank, destroy.'

Gunner: 'I'll shout armour piercing.'

Loader: 'I'll throw a shell on the rammer.'

Driver: 'I'll shout "make way", and brake slightly.'

On the left, on the right and behind us, thousands of people were walking in groups, each following its own route. Everyone was muttering the details of his own task and quietly exchanging words with his mates. For the time being, he was still permitted to do so. Behind us were the infantry, in front were reconnaissance, and sometimes aircraft 'flew past' - but even pilots were training on foot.

The following day, everything started all over again, but this time with the formation of platoons, and now only tank crews could exchange remarks inside the individual 'tanks', though one 'tank' was allowed to communicate with another. The day after, everything was repeated once again; with companies being formed. After that came the general inspection, for everybody. And, only after that, did training in battle technique actually start. One day was taken up with company exercises - every company separately and without firing. The next day, battalion exercises, the next regimental, then divisional, army, and finally the whole front. Every field was carefully covered with metal netting and armature, to prevent tanks from ploughing it all up with their tracks. Only before the final exercises was this grating removed, and within two weeks the grass had grown up.

Once every task in one region had been mastered, a new region replaced it. Thus, from the Chernigov region in the Ukraine we gradually moved over to Byelorussia, to Bobruysk, after which we returned to where we had started and repeated everything all over again, and so on ad nauseam. By this time, not only had our front rehearsed its tasks, but all the others had done the same. Then the

exercises were conducted as prescribed, at full speed, with the participation of several fronts. It was still not yet Operation 'Dnieper' itself, but just the preparations for it - 'the dress rehearsal'. And only then were we returned once more to our camps, where the replacement of battle equipment took place. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of soldiers were following in our footsteps, eradicating every sign of our training and gathering up metal, filling in shell holes, removing shell cases and searching for blind shells. . . . And then, only then . . .

A column of a motor-rifle battalion was moving forward towards the water boundary. Meanwhile the artillery and the air force were 'preparing the way' for the advance of this first of many battalions. Its task was simple: a forced crossing of the Dnieper to take possession of a bridge-head on the right side of the river and so secure a crossing place for our tank regiment with its artillery: after which the crossing of three armies would at once start, with a simultaneous tactical helicopter assault on the enemy's rear. That would be followed by the building of railway bridges and the crossing of the army's second echelon, and the landing of two airborne divisions in the enemy's deep rear. Then would come the crossing of two other fronts and engaging of the 'Westerners'. But, for the present, just one motor-rifle battalion was advancing . . .

This was an unprecedented honour for the battalion, although it had already been completely written off and would take no further active part. Two artillery brigades plus eight artillery regiments cleared the battalion's way, which meant 612 guns to support one battalion. In addition to this, a tank regiment was put forward just at the riverside cut and destroyed targets on the other bank - 600 guns and 100 tanks to support 300 men! Such a thing could only happen in honour of a great jubilee! Armoured personnel carriers plunged into the water, lifting up columns of fine spray, and swarmed towards the enemy bank which was wrapped in the smoke of exploding shells. Stumps and trunks of trees were being lifted high up into the sky. Fragments of shells rained down endlessly, sometimes reaching the middle of the river. According to plan, at the moment when the armoured personnel carriers reached their half-way mark across the river, the artillery should have switched to firing in depth, thus letting the battalion reach the bank and disembark its landing force. But the artillery showed no sign of conforming to plan. On the contrary, the rate of firing was increasing. This was either because the artillery observers had missed the right moment, or because the battalion had started its crossing two to three minutes early, but in any case it was impossible for the armoured

personnel carriers to continue and they started to circle on the spot, crashing into one another as they fought against the strong current of the Dnieper.

All this happened bang in front of the government observers. The Secretary General looked in bewilderment at the Defence Minister who shouted something quite unprintable into the microphone and the gun-fire immediately stopped. About thirty guns still maintained their fire, but the main chorus had ceased. Gradually the remainder also stopped, in a somewhat bashful fashion. Armoured personnel carriers meanwhile were continuing their pirouettes on the water. Apparently the battalion commander did not dare give the order to advance, because he could not guess what the bloody artillery would get up to next. In any case, he was under instructions not to pass the middle of the river until the artillery had switched to fire in depth. But any piece of artillery needs two to three minutes to alter its gun sights, and so the battalion foundered in the water. During training it had all been so good - and now just look at that bloody mess . . .

At last the artillery, slowly and with great reluctance, started to fire in depth, and the battalion moved towards the bank . . . but not one of the armoured personnel carriers succeeded in getting out of the water. During training, the artillery had always been very well organised, but now either the gunners were nervous or something else was wrong, but the whole riverside cut, which should have been left untouched, had been ploughed up and dotted with shell-holes. So, it was time for improvisation. The battalion commander ordered his men to jump into the water and swim to the bank. The river was shallow in some places but by no means everywhere. Everything got into a tangle. Instead of an accurate deployment, there was an unruly mob.

The situation was saved by the commander of the battalion, Colonel Rubanov: 'Forget it's a manoeuvre, it's a real battle.' Later, the military correspondents praised the gallant commander to the skies. His order was especially liked by the Head of the Chief Political Directorate, General Epishev. But the battalion commander was not seeking for effect. By this command, he was simply ordering disguised officers to forget about the big show, to forget the roles they had learned by heart, to forget all this 'ballet' and to act in the way prompted by their own common sense and by the experience obtained during their years as officer-cadets. The young officers understood their battalion commander, their lines straightened, company and platoon commanders evaluated the situation and, after a couple of minutes, the battalion commander flung his men into the attack from the very brink of the water, totally abandoning the armoured personnel carriers. After this, everything went almost according to the book, but there was just one

more hitch. The armoured personnel carriers could not get out of the water and we tankmen were seriously afraid that one of them might land in one of the secret underwater channels. Then the leading tank would come up against the armoured personnel carrier, all the following tanks would stop also, and there would be an almighty scandal.

But the valiant battalion commander saved the situation once again. He had already progressed a good distance with his infantry, when suddenly he remembered the tanks and radioed for his armoured personnel carriers to go off down river, thus clearing the way for the tanks. So, every armoured personnel carrier was to be captured by the enemy, or to come under enemy fire, but at least the way was open for all the advancing troops. This decision saved the whole of our peep-show but it ruined the colonel. After the exercises, Comrade Grechko assessed the colonel's decision as 'unjustified', and ordered his dismissal from the army.

Our tanks crossed the river without incident, pulling after them, under water, the artillery of the whole division. Ammunition and crews were transported on sapper carriers. After this, the whole ballet got into its swing once again. The 'Westerners', as expected, stampeded away in panic the moment they saw us on the horizon. Targets fell all over the place, the shells did not touch them, and, most important of all, the roar was quite deafening. The high command of the 'Easterners' had 'guessed' all the perfidious plans of the 'Westerners' and delivered suitably crushing blows. In short, everything worked out disgustingly to plan.

Three days later, we were brought to Kiev. Later, of course, the parade was shown on television and in the cinema, but only after substantial work had been put in by the censor. The parade was to take place on the military aerodrome.

The very sight of the aerodrome staggered us. Countless numbers of tanks, stretching, it seemed, from one horizon to another, were standing in the field alongside the runway. Later, photographs of this field crammed with tanks were to be published in all the newspapers of the world. At the time, some Western commentators expressed the opinion that perhaps these were only dummy tanks made of rubber standing there. Certainly, there were far too many tanks, indeed it was the biggest assembly of tanks in the history of humanity, but even though they were not made of rubber, they were quite lifeless. They were tanks used for training exercises and had definitely exhausted their resources. They were not tanks any more, but former tanks, and now they represented only raw material for the steel industry. After the parade, a few went to the Kiev tank-repairing works for a total overhaul, many

thousands went to the Chinese frontier to be used as immovable firing-posts, but the major part were sent to be melted down. This jubilee year turned out to be a record year for melted steel.

It is impossible to say how much this peep-show cost our peace-loving people. Even without taking into consideration ammunition, fuel, wear on artillery barrels and the thousands of tons of steel armature and concrete, and only counting worn-out tanks, the figure would approximate to billions of roubles.

On the world market, the British Chieftain, which was the contemporary of our T-62, could easily fetch 210,000 dollars a piece. During exercises, our 1st Ukrainian front completely wore out over 5,000 tanks and considerably shortened the motor resources of another 5,000 - and there were at least five fronts taking part in Operation 'Dnieper'. Out of fairness, it should be noted that, although other fronts' training exercises were similar to ours, they were still not as intensive. But, even so, we can take the amount of worn-out tanks as at least 10,000. Multiply this number by the price of one tank, and it will immediately be clear why the Soviet Union cannot overtake Spain in the production of motor cars.

The parade passed off without a ripple, as the saying goes, though there was just one jarring note. . . . The troops drawn up on the aerodrome awaited the arrival of the important guests. Those on the dais also waited. The parade, as usual, was to begin at 1000 hours, but Brezhnev, Podgornyy, Kosygin and Shelest were late, or, as we put it, they were delayed. (Bosses are never late.) The beginning of the parade was delayed, and this caused nervousness. In addition, in contrast to Moscow parades, a fly-past had been planned. The airforce was to fly from Borispol, and the flights were calculated down to the last second . . . but the big chiefs were delayed. Marshal Grechko, as he stood on the dais softly cursed our Beloved Party and Government and all the members of the Political Bureau with superbly refined abuse. Naturally he cursed them in a whisper but the microphones on the dais had been switched on at 1000 hours exactly, and his sotto voce was transmitted over a distance of ten kilometres - indeed over the whole of the parade. That is why the Kiev parade was eventually conducted somehow especially dashing, I would even say gaily. Half an hour later, when the troops solemnly marched past the big chiefs' dais, there was not the usual expression of stern resolution on the officers' and soldiers' faces. Instead all the faces blossomed out into smiles. And the big chiefs smiled back and waved with their fat little hands.

Operation 'Bridge'

'Comrades,' began the Defence Minister, 'in this new year of 1967 the Soviet Army will have to undertake a number of extremely complicated and responsible tasks, and thereby celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

The first and the most complicated of these tasks is to achieve a final solution to the problem in the Near East. This task lies completely upon the shoulders of the Soviet Army. The fiftieth year of the existence of the Soviet Union will thus become the last year of the existence of the Jewish State. We are ready to accomplish this honourable task, but we are held back only by the presence of the UN troops between the Jewish and the Arab forces.

'After the solution of the Near East problem, all efforts will be thrown into regulating the European problem. This task is not only for diplomats. Here again, the Soviet Army will have to solve a number of problems. In accordance with the decision of the Politburo, the Soviet Army will "bare its teeth". Under this heading, we include a number of separate measures and an unprecedented air display at Domodedovo. Immediately after victory in the Near East, grand naval manoeuvres will follow in the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, the Barents, the North and the Baltic seas. After all this, we will carry out the colossal "Dnieper" exercises and we will complete our demonstrations on 7 November with an elaborate parade in Red Square. Then, against the background of these demonstrations of force and of our victories in the Near East, we will urge the Arab countries to stop all oil supplies to Europe and America over a period of one or two weeks. I think' - and here the Minister smiled - 'Europe will then be more amenable to signing all those documents which we shall propose to them.'

'Will there be any developments in the space programme?' enquired the First Deputy of the Commander-in-Chief Land Forces.

The Defence Minister frowned.

'Unfortunately not. During the period of "voluntarism", flagrant errors were tolerated in this sphere. Now we have to pay for them. In the next ten or fifteen years we will not be able to do anything basically new in space, we shall only be repeating old successes with slight improvements.'

'What will be done concerning Vietnam?' asked the Commander of troops in the Far East Military District.

'We will be able to solve successfully all European problems only when the Americans have become tied up in Vietnam. I think we should not hurry to defeat Vietnam.'

The assembly became extremely animated, demonstrating its obvious approval.

'To finish with general matters,' continued Marshal Grechko. 'I would like everybody to give some thought to the following. Simultaneously with all our demonstrations of might, and quite apart from the number of individual troops involved and their training, it would be no bad idea to organise something which has never been seen before, something stunning and completely new. So if anybody among you, Comrade Generals, comes up with an interesting idea, do not hesitate to apply to me or to the Chief of the General Staff. I ask you in advance however, not to increase the number of tanks, guns and aircraft. You have no idea how many of them there will be - we shall gather everything we have to put on display. New technology, of course, should not be suggested. We will show everything which it is permissible to show, the BMP and the T-64, the MIG-23 and MIG-25, and possibly all the experimental machines. This, of course, is dangerous, but we must show them.'

Everyone present took the final words of the Defence Minister as a promise of high rewards for any original idea. So be it. And all the military minds started to work on the idea. Only, what could they suggest besides quantity and quality?

Nevertheless, an original idea was found. It emanated from Colonel-General Ogarkov, a former sapper officer.

Ogarkov proposed demonstrating not only the might of the army, but also that this might rested on the rock-solid base of military industry. Of course, he had no intention of revealing the whole system of supply, and there was no need to do so. To convince his guests of his wealth, the master of the house does not need to show all his treasures. One genuine painting by Rembrandt will be quite enough.

Ogarkov wanted to show just one element, but a sufficiently convincing one. What he proposed was to build a railway bridge over the Dnieper in record time, in say one hour, and then to let the railway echelons loaded with battle equipment and columns of tanks cross the river by means of this same bridge. A bridge of this kind would not only symbolize a strong back-up, but would also demonstrate to Europe that the Rhine was no protection.

Ogarkov's idea was met with delight by the Defence Ministry and by the General Staff alike. This was exactly what was required. Of course,

the Soviet Army did not possess any such bridge and there was not much time left before the beginning of the exercises. This fact, however, worried nobody, the main thing was that the desired idea had been found.

Colonel-General Ogarkov was endowed with absolute power, no less than that of the general designer before the launching of the first cosmonaut. Ogarkov himself was not only a brilliant, erudite and experienced engineer bridge-builder, but also an unusually exigent and wilful commander, as only Zhukov had been before him. That, of course, made the fulfilment of the task all the easier. All the scientific research establishments and railway troops, as well as all the industrial enterprises producing the army's engineering technology, were switched to his direct leadership. The entire production of these enterprises was stopped pending the order to begin the production of something so unprecedented.

At the same time, while the designers were busy making the first sketches and outlines for the future bridge, which was to be used only once, the selection of the youngest, healthiest and strongest officers, as well as the cleverest and most experienced engineers, started. In addition, competitions were arranged in the Soviet Army railway and engineering schools, open to officer-cadets who were graduating from these schools and were therefore already officers. As a result, thousands of the best officers and officer-cadets put on soldiers' uniform and came to Kiev from every corner of the Soviet Union. And in Kiev the 1st Guards Railway Bridge-Building Division was raised.

While it was not yet clear what kind of bridge was to be built, the division was launched into a training programme of unprecedented severity, since whatever kind of bridge was to be built, it was clear that everybody engaged in assembling it would have to work like acrobats under the circus big top.

While the original idea of the ultra-high-speed erection of a railway bridge continued to be developed and deepened, it was proposed that, as soon as the erection was complete, a track-laying machine and contingents equipped with rails should go across and, just as speedily, build a section of railway on the right bank, so that troops and battle equipment could be sent over. This idea was similarly accepted and approved.

Meanwhile all the design bureaux, each engaged independently on the development of the bridge, declared unanimously that to build even a floating bridge, with a load capacity of only 1,500 tons, was impossible in such a short period of time. Ogarkov saw red. Both his reputation and future were at stake. He reacted swiftly and accurately. First, he applied to the Central Committee and obtained their positive

approval that the designer who succeeded in building such a bridge would be awarded a Lenin Prize. Secondly, he invited all the designers to a conference and, having let them know the Central Committee's decision, proposed discussing all the details over again. At this conference, the plan to pass track-laying machines and echelons with rails over the bridge was rejected, as was the idea of columns of tanks crossing simultaneously with railway echelons. It was also decided that all wagons making the crossing must be empty, and that a column of empty lorries would move across alongside the train. Only one problem still remained. How to get across a locomotive weighing 300 tons? Naturally, someone suggested reducing the locomotive's weight by as much as possible. Two locomotives, a basic one and a duplicate, were urgently modernised and as many steel components as possible were replaced by aluminium ones. The steam boilers and fire-chambers were also changed. The locomotive's tenders were completely empty, they carried no coal and no water but only one very small barrel containing some kind of high-octane fuel, maybe aviation benzine or paraffin.

Time was racing past. The plan for the bridge had already been finished at the works, and the majority of the 1st Guards Railway Division's officers were sent there to acquaint themselves with its construction during the actual process of manufacture. Factories, which had not been operating for several months while the project was being planned, were now switched to a military regime. They worked twenty-four hours a day. All the workers were paid enormous wages and promised that, if they finished the work on time, they would receive unprecedented rewards from the Defence Minister personally.

The first elements of the bridge were meanwhile duly delivered to the division, and the training programme started. New elements were delivered every week, and during each training period, the bridge got longer and longer. Theoretical calculations proved that it should hold the weight of an empty echelon; but how it would work in practice no one, of course, knew. The most dangerous consideration was that, if the bridge sagged too much under the weight of the locomotive, the train's wagons could overturn into the water. Locomotive crews and drivers from motorised troops, all disguised officers, who would be moving over the bridge simultaneously with the echelon, started urgently to study the use of life-saving techniques, intended for the use of tank crews while under water. They could not, however, be given any practical training in crossing the bridge, because some sections destined to connect the two banks were still missing.

On the very day when the last two pontoons were delivered to the division, the mightiest military manoeuvres in the history of mankind began. They were code-named 'Dnieper'.

The floating railway bridge across the Dnieper was built in record time and, when the last piles were hammered in on the right bank, a locomotive smoothly glided on to the bridge from the left bank, slowly pulling behind it a long train. Simultaneously, a column of military vehicles glided on to the bridge. The leaders of Party and Government and numerous foreign guests watching the construction of this gigantic bridge never guessed that it was being built for railway communications. So, when the locomotive arrived on the bridge, all those on the Government dais applauded enthusiastically.

As the locomotive moved further and further from the bank, the sagging of the bridge beneath its weight became threateningly more noticeable. Heavy, sluggish waves fanned out from the bridge and spread towards both banks of the river, then, reflecting back, returned to hit the bridge, rolling it from side to side. Immediately, the three small figures of the frightened engine-drivers appeared on top of the locomotive. Until now, none of the foreign guests had paid any attention to the strange fact that there was no smoke issuing from the locomotive's smoke-stack, but the appearance of the engine-driver on top of the locomotive was noticed by everybody and provoked condescending smiles.

Later on, these frightened engine-drivers were skilfully removed from all photographs and films recording this famous crossing, but at that particular moment the situation was in need of saving, because the whole enterprise on which so much money and energy had been expended, could so easily have turned into a farce.

The slowly-swaying locomotive with its three engine-drivers on top lumbered nervously onwards.

'What is that there on the top?' asked Marshal Grechko slowly through clenched teeth.

All the other Soviet generals and marshals lapsed into complete silence.

Colonel-General Ogarkov stepped forward and reported smartly: 'Comrade Marshal of the Soviet Union! We have thoroughly incorporated the experiences learnt during the recent Arab-Israeli war, where aviation played such an exclusively important role. We therefore took measures to protect all rear communications against an enemy's air attack. Thus, in the event of war, we provide in addition to three engine-drivers, who are inside the locomotive, another three men with automatic grenade-launchers, Strela-2s. These grenade-launchers have not yet been delivered to the troops, but we have already started training their crews, which is what you are seeing at the present moment.'

All the foreign guests were staggered by such efficiency displayed by

the General Staff and by such a lightning reaction to changes in the practice of waging war.

The Defence Minister was also staggered by this ability to lie with such speed, aplomb and aptitude, without batting an eyelid and at the psychological moment. 'Fine fellow that,' thought the Defence Minister, 'he will go far with such capabilities as those.'

After the exercises, when the bridge was taken apart and sent for melting down, and the Guards Bridge-Building Division was disbanded, as being of no further use, and after all the designers and builders had been generously rewarded, it was unanimously decided to entrust to Ogarkov the organising of all future operations of this kind. And this is how the Chief Directorate of Strategic Camouflage, the first head of which was Colonel-General Ogarkov, was born. Shortly afterwards, Ogarkov was promoted to the rank of Army General.

Ogarkov's Chief Directorate started by taking over all military and later all state censorship, and later still also the majority of all the organisations dealing with misinformation, snatching many titbits even from the very jaws of the KGB. After this, the Chief Directorate's tentacles stretched out towards the armed forces: in future training exercises undertaken by the army, air force or navy could only take place after the approval of Ogarkov. Any military building, from space centres, launching silos and nuclear submarine bases, to the barracks of the KGB's frontier troops - everything must have the approval of Ogarkov. The next step was the subordination of all industry and building in the Soviet Union to him since, in our country, all objects have a military significance. And when the post of Chief of the General Staff became vacant, no one who knew about the existence of GUSM* and its real might had the slightest doubt as to who would land it.

Having attained the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union and the position of Chief of the General Staff, the former engineer bridge-builder did not, of course, rest on his laurels. The future belongs to him . . . unless his rivals devour him first.

*The abbreviation for Chief Directorate of Strategic Camouflage.

Training

'Puke! And that's an order!'

The young short-haired little soldier looked round pathetically for support. A platoon of equally young and equally short-haired soldiers, in front of whom he was standing, obviously did not sympathise with him a bit. In the first week of their service they had fully assimilated the iron rule of training: if one person does not obey the order, the whole section will suffer; if one section does not obey the order, the whole platoon will suffer; and if one platoon does not obey the order, then the sergeants will pick one of the platoon's soldiers and train him until he loses consciousness, or 'until he lies down' - and if he can no longer obey the orders efficiently, his section will suffer, and then the whole platoon and so on, ad infinitum. And there are too many kinds of training. For instance, you can order a section to dig trenches on an old ferro-concrete surface, and make sure that 120 centimetre-deep trenches are dug in thirty minutes, and those who do not obey the order will have to train again as a punishment.

The short-haired little soldier stood in front of the formation, but the formation was beginning to get angry - because it knew what lay in store for it if the order was not at once carried out.

I stood some way off, watching my second-in-command's actions. On the third day of my service as a platoon commander, I clearly understood one more law of the training division: do not interfere with the sergeant's work, otherwise you will have to do the work yourself.

Guards Staff Sergeant Kokhar', having waited ten seconds for effect, gave a clear order:

'Second section! Ten steps forward! Quick march! Platoon, listen to the order! Private Ravdulin was thirteen seconds late for parade, because he was in the canteen.'

Every day, every soldier in a training division has twenty minutes' free time after lunch and ten in the evening. Once he has broken away from lunch, a hungry soldier dashes off to the buffet, which is managed by only one sales-girl. There are 1,500 soldiers in a regiment of whom a good half, the hungriest ones, or the most optimistic, try to get through

to the counter. The majority, having got as far as the buffet are unable either to reach the counter, or to force their way out. For being even a second late on parade they will be severely punished, but the number of those trying to break through to the buffet never decreases. One wonders where they get the money if they are paid monthly three roubles and eighty kopeks, out of which they must also buy all their toilet articles. The answer lies in the fact that every day for two or three months they try to reach the buffet and always fail - there is the economy.

At that moment, all the regiment's forty platoons were formed up in the garrison backyard ready to start cleaning their weapons. No officers were to be seen and the sergeants, each in his own way, were correcting any infringements. Some were endlessly performing 'get-up-lie-down'; one platoon was crawling plastun-fashion over the courtyard, which was thickly covered in a layer of pig-shit.

My deputy had decided to limit himself to forcing the buffet culprit to vomit publicly what he had eaten, or rather what he had wanted to eat. But the culprit did not carry out the order well enough, so the whole section was going to have to put this mistake right. The first and the third sections, with a mixture of hatred and hope in their eyes, were waiting for their fate to be decided. 'One for all, all for one' is, after all, the basic principle of education.

'Second section! Bend forward!'

Ten backs smartly bent forward.

Tut two fingers ... of the left hand, IN THE MOUTH!'

The section smartly obeyed the order.

'From the right! . . . One after another! . . . PUKE!' Wriggling convulsively, the section carried out its commander's order and emptied its stomach in perfectly acceptable time.

'Section, ten steps forward! Quick march! Private Ravdulin, take your place in the formation! Stand easy!' The sergeant turned away, ostensibly to find a suitable place for the platoon to clean its weapons. At that precise moment, Ravdulin received two heavy blows in the stomach from his nearest short-haired comrades. Trying to choke back a broken, long-drawn-out moan, he crashed down on his knees, and then slowly fell into his own vomit.

During training, sergeants and officers never beat soldiers - that is an iron law in any training division.

Oster, the Ukraine. March 1968.

The Artists and the Craftsmen

The recently arrested man was brought to the regiment and locked up in the guardroom cell. He sat in the corner, looking sullenly at the floor. This sergeant had been arrested in Omsk, 4,000 kilometres from his native training regiment.

The military investigator arrived; the investigation began. How? Why? The matter is serious! and everything depends on a higher authority to look at what has happened, and interpret the present offence. If you class it as absence without leave, the sergeant will be given fifteen days under arrest, as a maximum. If you class it as desertion, it will be fifteen years at the very minimum.

If the sergeant had been caught within his own military district, the matter would have been hushed up of course, because there is good socialist competition between the districts as to which has fewer offences and violations. But since he had been caught in another district altogether, and Moscow therefore knew all about it, the commanders would do their best to show their determination to eradicate fully all such violations regardless of the consequences. But here again a contradiction creeps in - if this is indeed a desertion, then why was it not reported to Moscow six days ago, when the sergeant first disappeared?

A very unpleasant day had dawned for all the sergeant's direct superiors from platoon commander to military district chief.

The sergeant's name was Zumarov, and I was his platoon commander. That is why I was the first to see the investigator.

'Your sergeant?'

'Mine, Comrade Lieutenant-Colonel.'

'How long have you served together?'

'Fifteen months, Comrade Lieutenant-Colonel.'

He had been a cadet in the training platoon under my command, and later, after being promoted, had been left in the platoon, in command of the second section.

'What can you say about him?'

'Comrade Lieutenant-Colonel, I have never seen him before in my life!'

Apparently, the investigator had long since penetrated so deeply into the stern realities of the army that my statement produced no impression at all upon him.

'Was he a craftsman?' was his only question.

'Yes, a craftsman,' I confirmed.

This ended the investigation.

After me various other witnesses were called, the company commander, the political deputy of the battalion commander, and finally the battalion commander himself. Interviews with them also took no more than a minute. None of them had ever seen the sergeant in their lives before.

If all property is nationalized in a country, in other words subordinated to the state, then the natural aspiration of each person to rise, to distinguish himself and to improve his status can be achieved only within the limits of the state apparatus, which incidentally requires many (far too many) professional officials, or executives with higher education.

Any degree certifying graduation from a higher educational institution opens the way into any number of spheres: the Party, the Trade Unions, the Young Communist League, the KGB, Sport, Literature and Art, Industry, Agriculture, Transport, anywhere you like. This is why in any socialist society the following paradox can be observed: nobody seeks a profession, only a degree, and it does not matter what kind. Of course, it is better if the degree has a slight inclination towards the social sciences, rather than to the exact sciences. This is simpler, and more useful in life, because the most important thing in one's career is 'to learn to talk smoothly'.

And, owing to the fact that everyone rushes into learning Marxist-Leninist philosophy and Party history, people who can do something with their hands, and not their tongues, are few and far between. Hence, such persons are worth their weight in gold. You only have to look at how they live now - the car-mechanics, the locksmiths, the sanitary technicians and the house-painters and floor-fillers (of course, I'm speaking about those who earn additional money in their free time, and who doesn't!).

People who can make something are especially honoured in the Soviet Army, because the system of control and evaluation of sub-units, units and formations is constructed in such a way that it just cannot be managed without craftsmen.

Judge for yourself. Some kind of commission arrives in a regiment, so where will it start its check-up, what is it interested in? Before everything else comes the ideological state of the troops - are they true believers, or has the decay already set in? How are you to check

whether the bourgeois, or the maoist, or the revanchist, the nationalist or the zionist or any other band of propaganda exerts any influence upon the Soviet warrior? It is very simple. First, the commission must inspect the whole camp. Are there enough portraits of the Party and Government leaders, are there enough placards and slogans, is there enough visual agitation in general. What shape is the club in? The room devoted to the glorification of battle? How is the Lenin room in each company, in what shape are each company's paper and satirical news-sheet? And what about each platoon's daily 'battle leaflet'?

After all this, one must discover what a soldier does in his free time. What is he doing? What is he thinking? And that is quite simple too: a concert and sports competition are laid on for the commission. Everything is in order! There is more evidence - cups, pennants, banners. This one is for sport, that one for amateur activities in the arts. Well, things are clearly all right there, but how do they stand with internal order, and with the observance of military regulations? Here again, there are no problems. Feast your eyes: fences are painted, paths are swept, windows are washed, beds are made and perfectly ranged in line, it would be quite impossible to arrange them any better.

Believe me, if any regimental commander succeeds in giving a better account concerning all these points than his colleagues, and in addition manages to hide all crimes and disciplinary offences, which are happening every day, his promotion is assured. The most important consideration is to be able to hide all the unattractive aspects, but exercises and manoeuvres will not be taken into consideration.

In order to win a victory in this interminable competition, every commander, from company commander upwards, must have painters, artists and sportsmen, preferably of a semi-professional level. A special term has been invented in the army for these craftsmen, they are called 'dead souls', because although they are registered as gun-layers, loaders, radio-men, etcetera, they are nevertheless occupied with quite other matters. Some are concocting newspapers day and night. Some are strumming guitars, some are defending their company's honour in sport. According to their particular qualifications, the craftsmen are divided into categories - at company, battalion, regimental or divisional level. For example, in every district there are special sports battalions, sub-divided into light athletics companies, basket-ball platoons, or even high jump platoons.

The struggle to acquire craftsmen goes on permanently between commanders at all levels. All lower-ranking officers hide their best painters and artists from the higher-ranking officers who, in their turn, haunt the various clubs and sports rooms hoping to grab the best craftsmen for themselves. It is open war, with all the rules and

methods, the appropriate unwritten laws and traditions. There's enough of it to fill a novel. Direct exchanges also exist, although these take place more often between independent commanders: 'Give me a weight-lifter and a guitarist, and I'll give you a house-painter and a painter,' or, 'Comrade Colonel, don't give me a bad mark for that exercise' (this kind of bargain would be struck via a middleman from another division) 'and I'll give you a sculptor! He'll make a model of anyone you like for the officers' mess in your division. Lenin or Andropov, anyone you wish!'

All craftsmen work on the piece rate system. The principle of material self-interest is sacred. Payment alters depending on the category. Sometimes it happens this way: 'If you become an Olympic champion - we'll give you the rank of senior lieutenant!' And anyway what does it cost the Defence Minister to give away one or two additional little stars? One footballer even attained the rank of major-general without serving a single day in the army, although it must be admitted that the footballer's name in that instance was Yuriy Brezhnev.

In the Kiev military district, at the tank works, the repairing of thousands of private cars was organised. The district chiefs were filling their pockets with millions of roubles, and the craftsmen who were repairing these cars were given leave every evening, and everybody was happy, generals, craftsmen and consumers. The quality of the work was excellent and it is a pity that the shutters were eventually put up. Now there is nowhere in the whole of Kiev to have a Zhiguli car repaired.

Even if the craftsmen had not been paid at all, their work would still have been highly efficient, because to swill all day or to hit a tennis ball about is much more pleasant than digging deep trenches in the heat and the dirt; similarly, drawing a satirical paper in a warm store-room is much more pleasant than changing tank-tracks in the frost. That at least is established fact. In addition, all craftsmen receive endless periods of leave and holidays, all at the expense of others, of course. It is from this that the decay of an army springs (it is not the only cause, and certainly not the most important, but it is one of the basic ones). Let us say for the sake of argument that a drunk, dirty, scruffy soldier is walking along the street. Notice how all the patrols stand aside: it turns out that he is the personal cabinet-maker to the divisional commander. And that one over there, who is also drunk, turns out to be the personal workman of the divisional staff chief, for whom he is engaged in digging a private swimming pool. It is far better not to touch these fellows, or to have anything to do with them.

But let us return to our sergeant with whom we started this story. By

profession he was a jeweller, and the son of a jeweller to boot. He joined the army complete with the tools of his trade - little saws, little vices and little tweezers. It is an everyday occurrence for young chaps to join the army with their guitars and balalaikas, with their brushes and canvas. The Soviet people have long understood our fine army customs and they exhort their sons to reveal their particular talent from their very first day in the army.

Zumarov demonstrated his talent immediately after joining our training regiment. He was promptly ordered to fashion a small silver tank which could be presented to the head of some visiting commission. He was reckoned to belong to my training platoon, and I was given six months to make a perfect sergeant out of him, a future commander of a T-62, but I never once saw him throughout his entire service. Out of a total of thirty men in my platoon I had six others like him. True, the six others - a painter, a violinist, a pianist, and three sportsmen - were non-residents; so that sometimes, perhaps once or twice a week, they did turn up in the platoon, and I managed to teach them something.

Officer-cadet Zumarov was not even present at the passing-out inspection. How could he be? He had seen nothing except miniature tanks which he was carving from bronze and glass. The regimental commander took the test for him and whispered to the inspecting commission. As a result, Zumarov became an excellent soldier, was awarded the rank of sergeant and then left behind in our regiment as a section commander in order to train a new generation of tank commanders. He was posted as a section commander to my platoon and, from that day to this, I never clapped eyes on him.

Do not imagine that I was the only one who had problems with the 'dead souls' - every other platoon commander had six or seven corpses on his register. Here at least distribution is just and no one is offended. This is how we train cadres for our beloved army. When such a tank commander/ignoramus arrives from training to join his battle regiment, he honestly reports at the very outset, 'I am not a tank commander, I am a singer.' Of course, they are pleased in the regiment. 'You are just the thing we've been waiting for!' As a result, the tank is commanded by the gunner, and the baritone just sings his way through operatic arias, and everybody is pleased. The best craftsmen, such as our jeweller, would never under any circumstances be surrendered by a training regiment to a battle regiment, but would be held on to, under any pretext, most frequently as nominal instructors.

But Sergeant Zumarov had come to the notice of the divisional commander, and then of the army commander, and had consequently moved first to divisional, then to army, level. He could have risen even

higher, but unfortunately he was arrested by a patrol and, what is even worse, in another district.

After the first interview with the military investigator, I promptly decided that there would not be a second one, as I knew absolutely nothing about the sergeant - at what level he was now, who his real commander was, or how many times a week he was given leave. But the second interview nevertheless did take place.

'Where is his oath of allegiance?'

'I do not know.'

I really could not know that.

The fact is that every Soviet soldier after a month of primary training eventually takes the oath of allegiance. This can be done only after the soldier has fired his weapon for the first time. The oath of allegiance is printed for each soldier on a separate piece of paper and is signed by him personally. This is done so that this separate sheet can be put on his criminal file, if the need arises.

But, at that moment when the whole training platoon was on the shooting-range prior to signing the oath, Zumarov was making his first tank.

'Never mind,' the regimental commander had said. 'You can go with the next platoon.'

But then the regimental commander apparently forgot to see to it - poor chap, he had so many problems! I, too, as his immediate commander, was unable to see to it. I was told not to interfere in matters which did not concern me. So I didn't. I simply had no means of doing so.

Now it became clear that Zumarov was neither a sergeant nor even a soldier. Nor was he under military jurisdiction as he had never signed the oath of allegiance - so he could not even be judged under military law, and under civilian law he had not committed any offence as he had just gone from one town to another. And of course he lost the whole year and a half which he had spent in the army. This period could not be counted because time in military service is calculated from the day of signing the oath. Now, Zumarov could have started a commotion. 'I don't know anything about it. I joined the army and served conscientiously. It is not my fault but yours! Why didn't you put me under oath?'

And indeed a scandal flared up and had to be nipped in the bud, because not only pawns like regimental commanders might have suffered in the process but some people much higher up. The scandal was hushed up at the level of the Kiev Military District. A compromise was found. According to the law, Zumarov had another six months to serve but he was offered immediate demobilisation on grounds of

health. Zumarov accepted the compromise. It was reported to Moscow that Sergeant Zumarov of the Kiev district had indeed been arrested in Omsk but that he was no longer on active service, but had been prematurely demobilised. The sergeant was said to be suffering from mental derangement, as a result of which he did not produce the relevant documents when requested to do so by the patrol.

The Zumarovs of this world are the lucky ones, but there are a lot of them in our indestructible army - more's the pity.

Misha

'The little key?'

'Comrade Private, first button up your tunic, you are addressing a Lieutenant-Colonel, the duty officer of the military district staff.'

The private simply did not react at all to the lieutenant-colonel's words.

'The little key!' quietly repeated the young soldier with the broad peasant face which showed such superiority and contempt that the duty officer simply did not dare exercise the power of his nearly limitless authority.

The duty officer of the district staff is a very superior being altogether. So much so, that having caught sight of him from afar, any officer absentmindedly assumes a dignified air and straightens his belt and the peak of his cap. Whereas now, a young soldier, who should tremble in front of any lance-corporal, stood in front of him and simply did not react at all to his reprimand.

'The little key' repeated the soldier, evidently savouring the situation to the full. Deliberately, he did not say which key he wanted, and the key itself, in defiance of regulations, he called 'little key', which theoretically is quite inadmissible between a soldier and an officer.

At this moment, a major with a red stripe on his left arm - the duty officer's deputy - entered the room. Having appraised the situation in a trice, the major suddenly gave a radiant smile, and jumping up he went to a huge safe and jerked open its massive doors. He snatched one of the hundreds of keys hanging there and, with an obsequious smile, stretched it out towards the arrogant soldier. The latter took the key between two fingers, measured the staff duty officer with a contemptuous gaze, unhurriedly turned his back and, after deliberately spitting on the floor beside a spittoon in the corner, he left the room, slamming the door behind him.

The duty officer was white with rage. Turning towards the major, and enunciating every syllable, he asked deliberately: 'Comrade Major, to whom did you dare give that key without my express permission?'

'But that's Misha, Comrade Lieutenant-Colonel,' said the major obsequiously.

'Which key did you give him?'

The key to the study of the district commander's first deputy.'

'But you . . . but you ... do you understand? Did you read the instructions? . . . There are state secrets in that study . . . Only a senior aide-de-camp or an officer on a special mission is entitled

'But that is Misha!'

'I don't want to hear anything about any Misha, you will be put under arrest together with your Misha! Only the senior aide-de-camp or an officer on a special mission can be given that key and then only after the deputy commander's order and only after the said officer has signed in duplicate for this key, in case anything should disappear. Surrender your pistol and cartridges . . .' Whereupon the lieutenant-colonel turned to me, the guards commander, and said, 'Arrest this Misha and the major!'

'Misha', declared the major suddenly, 'is the relief driver of the Commander of Leningrad Military District's First Deputy, Lieutenant-General Parshikov.'

'Ah!' The lieutenant-colonel stopped short. 'So, why did you not say so before?'

'And that's not all,' the major cruelly continued, 'that's only officially, but unofficially ... he ... he drives Maria Michaylovna, his wife . . . that's what!'

The duty officer slowly left the room.

'Now there you are, Lieutenant, you learn from that! They keep sending all kinds of idiots here . . . They've got accustomed in the regiments to shouting at anyone, without knowing the particulars . . . But here you've got military district staff! Here, one must have a head on one's shoulders! Staff work is subtle, not everyone can . . . It's a good thing that Misha is not touchy . . . or we'd now be in a fine old mess!'

The whole night through I thought about Misha. The lieutenant-colonel was old enough to be his father, but because of his status he was not simply a lieutenant-colonel, battalion commander or some kind of a regimental commander's deputy, no, this was a lieutenant-colonel of a special kind, not a duty officer on the staff of a division, corps or army, no, a duty officer on the staff of a military district! One could clamber all one's life up the slippery career ladder and still not reach such a dizzy height. And suddenly Misha breezes in, just like Misha - no more and no less - a chap who has served no more than six months in the army, while the lieutenant-colonel has been through the whole war ... If fate had sent this same Misha to our training division he would now be grovelling even in front of the lance-corporals . . .

Where did he get his swaggering conceit from? Where did he acquire that look on his face? It goes without saying that a relief driver for

Lieutenant-General Parshikov's spare car is not the lowest figure on the military district staff. But, still, where did all that contempt come from?

Maybe our leaders have some kind of special system for selecting people who are marked with a stamp of churlishness? The lad could only have driven the manure lorry on a farm, nothing more, so where did he manage to acquire all this veneer? Or maybe we are all like him and, when we reach the foot of the pyramid of power, we forget everything except ourselves and, blinded by our own authority, we show nothing but contempt for all those lower than ourselves?

In that case what liberties must the cook and chamber-maid permit themselves, they who are so much closer to Parshikov's own person than Misha, and who have been in the job for years? And supposing Comrade Parshikov suddenly becomes a colonel-general and not only a deputy but the commander of the whole military district? What liberties will Misha permit himself then? The very thought made me feel giddy.

In my uneasy sleep, that swine-faced Misha pursued me along the endless nightmarish corridors of absolute power with no one to control him and nothing to stop him.

Part Three

The Way towards Commander-in-Chief

Every commander of a platoon or a battalion or a regiment must seek a way of distinguishing himself and showing himself off to his immediate superior, otherwise younger, more pushing officers will trample him underfoot.

The commander of our division was very clever at all kinds of tricks and probably owes to this his promotion to the rank of major-general. He looks like going higher still. In military matters, he rated an absolute zero, but this of course plays no role in the Soviet Army nor does it have the least effect upon one's military career. What one must possess is a talent for organisation and some 'savvy'! So it was that the divisional commander worked out that his career prospects would depend not on spotless parade grounds or neat rows of beds in the barracks, but on something more original.

His particular plan was as simple as it was original: to invite the Chief of the Kiev Military District, Army General Yakubovskiy, to a meeting with the officers of the division to say, 'Look, dear Comrade Chief, in our division, while all the others are busy with battle training and other assorted shit, if you will forgive the expression, our division is not. Our division can't sleep or eat, we only long to see our beloved Chief and to hear how he defended our beloved Motherland from her enemies and why he was awarded his many orders and medals. And, in general, please take good note of our love for you. Indeed, we love you so much that we recognise no other authority. This is the kind of division we are, and we have a remarkable divisional commander.'

A top-secret conference of the district's military commanders was in progress. Questions concerning mobilisation preparedness were under discussion. The walls of the big hall were covered with maps, graphs and diagrams. The discussion was serious and businesslike. Worthwhile ideas about how to raise our battle readiness and the improved training of troops were being put forward.

There were strict time limits: three minutes for divisional commanders and their chiefs of staff, five minutes for army commanders and their deputies and chiefs of staff, ten minutes for the district comman-

der, his deputies and for the chief of the district's staff. Everybody, without exception, must take part, but only with specific criticism and specific suggestions, there must be no waffle.

When our divisional commander's turn came, he rose and, without even glancing at his notes, began:

'We lack battle experience, Comrades, we have lived so many years without war that we have forgotten everything. Many regimental commanders, let alone battalion and company commanders, have never even smelt gunpowder. And just look what a chance we are missing! We are serving under the command of such a glorious general as Comrade Ivan Ignat'evich Yakubovskiy, who fought throughout the whole of the last war. This is where we must accumulate our experience! In my division, I held a meeting, and my young officers advised me . . . They said, Comrade General, invite Comrade Yakubovskiy to visit our division, let him tell us about war! Comrade Commander, I take this opportunity of passing on to you the request of our division's young officers!'

All the other generals present were disgusted by this blatant flattery. The main thing was that our general had avoided making any specific criticism or any specific suggestions. And yet his speech was accepted as making a specific suggestion and the most valuable one to boot.

'Well, all right, I'll come then,' mumbled dear old Ivan Ignat'evich. 'Why not, after all?'

When the military chief had left the hall, the army commander's deputy, Lieutenant-General Gelenkov, turned towards our cunning divisional commander and, in a sugary voice, loud enough to be heard by all the others, he asked whether it was not perhaps his post that our efficient divisional commander was aiming at. Everybody laughed appreciatively. But the divisional commander was not offended: the deputy army commander was still his direct superior for the time being, and the divisional commander never took offence at his superiors. This was one of his basic principles which had never let him down.

After returning from the conference, the divisional commander got busy. All battle training was immediately stopped - tanks, armoured personnel carriers, guns, all were put into mothballs. Every soldier was thrown into 'sprucing up' work, cleaning and repainting cars and redecorating the barracks. More than half the division went off to do 'illegal' jobs: some to collective farms, others to unload railway wagons or to work in factories.

The director of any factory and the chairman of any collective farm are always asking military commanders to help them out with men. Nowhere are there enough people, in collective farms or in industry or

transport. Such 'illegal' operations are mutually profitable. The military commander illegally receives cement, asphalt, bricks, steel, timber, nails and, what is even more important, paint, while the directors and chairmen are able to report increased productivity and an over-achieved budget. At present labour productivity is very much the fashionable criterion. Even Vladimir Ilich Lenin taught us, long ago, that in the end productivity is the most important single factor in the victory of new economic structure. Plan fulfilment is of paramount importance.

So, industry, agriculture and transport all welcome activity of this nature by the army. They are ready to accept any number of soldiers at any given moment and to pay for their labour generously in kind. The only problem the directors ever have is how to coax military commanders to let them have more soldiers on a more regular basis. The army is equally pleased with the practice. Indeed, the only person opposed to it is the Defence Minister. He carries on a merciless campaign against the system, but how can one person resist the will of the collective?

Suppose the Defence Minister gives a resounding order: only he personally, and then only in exceptional circumstances, may order the troops to tear themselves away from battle training. The district commanders listen attentively, nodding their heads. Who could possibly impinge upon the monopoly of the Defence Minister? The Minister orders one of the divisions to work for three days in the fields or at the factory, and to pay all the proceeds into the Defence Ministry's fund. Very well, it shall be done!

For three days, the division works for the Defence Ministry, but on the fourth day it works for the military district commander. If a Moscow commission should arrive unexpectedly, it is always possible to justify oneself: 'We are working for you on your own orders.'

Every district commander issues a similar directive: only on his explicit orders may troops engage in collateral work instead of battle training, in all other instances their work will be considered illegal. The army commanders, of course, agree, but promptly issue similar orders in their own name to stop all unofficial work. In my own experience, our regiment nevertheless used to spend exactly half its time moonlighting. This state of affairs is quite common in the Soviet Army and exists everywhere, except among troops stationed abroad. Indeed, it seems that the Soviet Army could be halved without any damage to its fighting efficiency. This was exactly what Khrushchev attempted, but he failed to provide the army either with sufficient rations or with the necessary supplies. Khrushchev's reforms were not a success, and the army, though cut by nearly half, still continued its moonlighting operations just as intensively as before.

But let us return to our brave divisional commander, who so resolutely directed 4,000 soldiers to carry out unofficial work.

He was a bold man, but he took a calculated risk. Neither the district staff nor the army staff could reproach him for anything, because Army General Yakubovskiy had consented to make his unofficial visit, thus allowing the divisional commander to prepare an appropriate welcome for him.

Having allotted jobs to every soldier in his division, he ordered the chief of staff to take charge of building materials, and his deputy to organise the complete renovation of the whole barracks. He, together with the chief of the Political Department, busied himself with the most important task of all - the planning of the reception itself.

There was not much time left, only two months at the most, during which it was necessary to learn by heart the life history of our beloved general, to select from it the most striking and memorable details, and to prepare suitable questions; seemingly innocent questions, but ones which would stimulate the general to go into detail about his most heroic and amazing feats. It was also necessary to organise a competition among the young officers, to choose those who would ask questions from the floor, as well as supplementary questions, and then to carry out lengthy training for both these groups. Another competition was arranged to discover the best painters and craftsmen, who were then ordered to draw a gigantic map pinpointing events in the commander's war career and to prepare souvenirs to be presented by the personnel of our division. And, of course, there would be a big concert and banquet, to be laid on by the Political Department and the chief of the divisional rear services.

In the competition among young officers, I happened to be one of those selected and, at the distribution of roles, became the third relief for the officer who had to ask: 'Comrade Commander, please tell us how you shoed Churchill.'

All my friends and I too had heard this story a thousand times, and now we had to stimulate Yakubovskiy into telling it yet again. During the war, Great Britain provided the Soviet Union with Churchill tanks. But they were not ideally suited to the conditions of a Russian winter, and their tracks skidded on the snow. Then, one of the soldiers in Lieutenant-Colonel Yakubovskiy's tank brigade proposed putting spikes on the caterpillar tracks, as a result of which the practicability of using the tanks in the snow increased greatly. That very day, it was reported to the front commander that Yakubovskiy's brigade had 'shoed' Churchill. At a suitable moment, the front commander reported to Stalin that Lieutenant-Colonel Yakubovskiy had shoed Churchill. The joke pleased Stalin and the Lieutenant-Colonel after many

months at the rear in the front line reserve, became a Hero of the Soviet Union and a personal favourite of Stalin. Gradually, with the rise of Yakubovskiy, this story began to change in detail and became encrusted with new heroic overtones.

These two months preparation for our important guest in a small Ukrainian town called Oster were for me the very best time in the whole of my service in the training division. My soldiers were working away somewhere, I did not know exactly where. Every morning after breakfast, all those who had been selected to put questions to our guest gathered in the officers' mess and the rehearsal started: first question, first question understudy, second question, second understudy, etcetera. After a week of intensive training, a theatre director was invited down from Kiev and the whole thing started to go with a swing.

There is no doubt that our commander was a genius, but even if he had been an absolute idiot we could have turned him, in the space of two months, into a veritable Napoleon Bonaparte. That, at least, was the considered opinion of all the division's officers, of everyone who took part in the preparations for the reception of our beloved general.

After marinating for a month in this extraordinary ragout I fully understood the whole process of the cult of the personality for the rest of my life. It became quite obvious to me why we loved Lenin and Brezhnev so much, and why we loved Khrushchev and Stalin so much. All of us who were preparing for the reception of Yakubovskiy were mere amateurs, we were about to glorify one of the sixteen district commanders, not even the Commander-in-Chief, Land Forces; we had a mere two months at our disposal. Give me a couple of years, a staff of professional speakers and all the State's resources at my disposal, with the right to annihilate if necessary millions of dissatisfied people, and I will create for you from a bald, stuttering, impotent, mad Herod, a genius for all times and for all peoples!

The great general mounted the platform, took a sip of water, put his papers in front of him, cleaned his spectacles with his handkerchief, checked them against the light, cleaned them again, coughed slightly, put his spectacles on his nose, drank some more water and started to read.

'Comrades! The whole Soviet people in-spi-red by the his-tor-ical deci-sions of the Party Congress . . . etc . . . with seven-league boots . . . astronauts ploughing the furrows of space . . . milking and wool-shearing . . . millions of tons and billions of cubic metres . . .'

Then smoothly, as if through habit, he switched to the Imperialists, the Maoists and the Zionists, the enemy intelligence services and other disruptive elements; and then, equally smoothly, to the glorious Soviet Army, vigilantly watching over . . .

After two and a half hours, he neared his conclusion: 'And the gallant soldiers of our Red Banner District, and the gallant soldiers of the whole of our army, will spare no pain . . . or effort . . .'

Two and a half hours without once deviating from his prepared text, two and a half hours reading at dictation speed about things which we are all obliged to read every day in the editorials of Red Star. And that was all! Nothing else. No questions, no answers, not a personal word. Not a single word.

He collected up his papers, finished off the bottle of water, took off his spectacles, and departed to the accompaniment of thunderous applause.

Hundreds of officers, ready for anything, but not for this lunacy, were wildly clapping while trying not to catch one another's eyes, for the shame of it. Everybody was struck by the dullness, callousness, colourlessness, absolutely inhuman heartlessness of a stupid, corrupt, overfed official who was as fat as a bull.

'Where did such an idiot spring from?' I asked rhetorically after the first glass. Of course, I didn't expect an answer, knowing Yakubovskiy's background maybe better than he himself knew it. However, I was deeply mistaken, as we clearly knew only the visible part of the story.

'He distinguished himself at the battle for Moscow.'

This answer, totally unexpected, revolted me.

'At the battle for Moscow there was certainly no trace there of Yakubovskiy.'

'I'm not talking of 1941 - I mean 1953.'

'Get on with it then. Your audience is waiting for you!'

'Being one of Stalin's favourites, our old friend Yabukovskiy* had become commander of the Kantemirov court tank division. When the trouble started the commander of the Taman' Division was reluctant to raise his hand against the State Security people, and he was eventually put up against the same wall alongside them. But Yakubovskiy did not hesitate. He's always ready to carry out any order from Party or Government, but it all depends whose order comes first: if Beriya had given the order first, Yakubovskiy would happily have hanged the whole Politburo, but Beriya didn't give the first order . . . After that, his star rose even further as all the leaders were so grateful to him.'

'He may become a marshal, or Chief of the General Staff.'

'No, never. Men like him are given more delicate posts, governing peoples' democracies for instance.'

These prophetic words came true exactly three months later, when

*By means of this simple juggling with the letters, his surname becomes a thing of ridicule and approximates in meaning to 'Fuckerskiy'.

Army General Yakubovskiy was promoted to the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union and given the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty Powers. On the other hand, maybe the lieutenant who predicted this was not a prophet at all, but just had a contact somewhere at the base of the power pyramid, where everything is known already - the past and the future of all 250 million souls.

About two days after these changes in the upper echelons of the Soviet Army, our battalion was ordered to go urgently to Kiev 'to carry out the work of transferring equipment from the command points'.

We were taken to Yakubovskiy's country house (not the one where his wife lived, but his own personal house). A young aide-de-camp and about ten soldier-gardeners were directing the work there. There is, believe it or not, a famous horticultural training school in Moldavia, whose graduates are drafted into the army and appointed not as machine-gunners or snipers, but as gardeners at numerous military 'establishments'. That is actually how it is put on their military cards. Gardeners serve two years in the army, three years in the navy, and they acquire extremely high standards in their art.

Our work at Yakubovskiy's villa was somewhat unusual. We dug up the best trees according to the gardeners' instructions, wrapped their roots in sacking and then carried them to the airfield, where heavy aircraft of Military Transport Aviation, especially allotted for this operation, awaited us.

It is difficult to say what the point of all this was. Maybe Yakubovskiy or his wife did not want to be separated from familiar trees or perhaps, by removing them, he wanted to demonstrate his contempt for his successor, Lieutenant-General Kulikov, who was then a complete nonentity, and only later received the rank of colonel-general.

My deputy, Sergeant Kokhar', was more puzzled than the others by this air transportation of trees.

'Why the hell by air? Look what a long way it is from here to the airfield - the roots will get damaged. It would have been much simpler to give us a railway detachment since the branch line runs just beside the house, and it would have taken them only one night to reach Moscow. What a crazy idea - aircraft! A train would have been much more economical!'

The all-army conference of young officers, the Kremlin, Moscow.
26 November, 1969.

New Ideas

The rumour that the Head of the Chief Political Directorate of the Soviet Army, Army General Epishev, suffers from the severest form of sclerosis has been persistently repeated. Sharp tongues maintain that, when he turns over a page, he promptly forgets completely what he has just read.

I don't usually believe rumours, simply because I know only too well where so many of them originate. But, subsequently, I had an opportunity to prove that, in this instance, the rumours were very accurate indeed.

Epishev mounted the platform, cleared his throat, drank some water and, in a dreary monotone, started to read about the historic decisions of the Party Congress (decisions which, incidentally, for some funny reason, never seem to bear fruit), concerning the care of our beloved peasant workers and the further development of agriculture, and the strengthening of our defences.

At the speaker's first words, the many thousand-strong audience lowered their heads over their notebooks and started compulsively to summarise the words of this man who occupied such a high position in the Party, the Army and the State. I too lowered my head and pretended to write. Personally, I have a deep antipathy to writing summaries and, in the present case, it was anyway completely absurd - first, because his speech would be published in all the military newspapers, and secondly because Epishev would certainly not tell us any more than is printed every day in Red Star.

Everything was going just as usual when suddenly the audience flinched. Epishev's vivid and memorable harangue had suddenly stopped in the middle of a word. Then he began to read it all over again from the very beginning. 'In the name of and at the request of . . .' he welcomed all those present, who answered him with a storm of applause. And everyone started to write down precisely what they had already noted down only a moment before.

After about five minutes, Epishev again stopped and began to read a new sentence, absolutely unconnected with the previous one. The

audience sensed, rather than understood, that the speaker was repeating himself, that he was giving the same examples which he had already given, and that he was shouting out the same slogans which he had shouted just a short while ago.

Suddenly, everybody guessed, everybody understood, what the matter was. Owing to the negligence of the researchers (why must they consume so much caviar?), Epishev had been given a speech written by somebody else, but in duplicate: beginning with the two first pages, followed by the second ones, and so on. In our army, no one reads his speech before he delivers it in public, and Epishev was simply following this unwritten regulation. The audience was somewhat perplexed. But the speaker, who was obviously not accustomed to noticing public reaction of any sort, continued his monotonous reading. In this way, he read forty pages instead of twenty.

After finishing his historic speech, the Head of the Chief Political Directorate returned in triumph to his place on the platform where the Minister of Defence, Marshal of the Soviet Union Comrade Grechko, was sitting with the other sclerotics and decrepit senile old bodies. None of them even so much as noticed what had just happened.

A cynical critic may not believe this story, but I have more than 2,000 witnesses; indeed, more than that, since many of them summarised this speech in their notebooks with two introductions, two conclusions and twenty repetitions, starting and ending in the middle of a word.

The most astonishing thing is that all this happened in 1969 at the time of the USSR young army officers' congress. A good ten years have passed since then and the young officers have become mature ones, but Comrade Epishev is still at his post. Untiringly he fights on. Boldly he instils the most advanced and effective methods throughout the broad masses of the army. He resolutely reflects, through the prism of the class struggle, the newest development of world history and brings to the army the unfading light of Leninist ideas.

The Group of Soviet Troops in Germany. Spring 1970. As one of a group of observers, I took part in 3rd Shock Army manoeuvres.

Determination

The Commander-in-Chief of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, Army General Kulikov, liked to control everything himself. Sometimes, he flew over the roads in a helicopter, watching Soviet military vehicles exceeding the speed limit. Sometimes, he lay in the bushes, eavesdropping on what his officers were talking about in their smoking room. But most of all he enjoyed putting on sports clothes and bicycling through Vunsdorf, especially in the evenings.

It was a Saturday evening and officers' pay day. All the beer houses were packed with staff officers, as everyone was taking the opportunity to drink as much of that lovely beer as he could, because when you returned to the Soviet Union where would you find such good beer?

The Commander-in-Chief flitted like a ghost past the brilliantly-lit windows of restaurants and beer houses, and anger welled up inside him. He could not understand the passion of Soviet officers for German beer. The sated can never comprehend those who are hungry, and he was always supplied with the best wines and had eight cooks, who are always in the Commander-in-Chief's baggage train ready to prepare the most recherche dishes for him. Like any true communist, Kulikov roundly condemned drunkenness and crusaded against it with great determination.

'Drinking, eh? Well, I'll soon show you, with your drinking!'

A sudden idea flashed across his mind, he smiled to himself, turned his bicycle round and rode back towards the Group of Soviet Troops Headquarters.

Without changing his clothes, he entered his study, thought for a moment and picked up a red telephone which had no selector dial. It was answered at once. The Commander-in-Chief blew into the receiver as was his wont and then imperiously ordered: 'The 215th independent sapper battalion - battle stations! Version 7, cypher 2323777.'

'Right, Comrade,' came the answer.

Half an hour later, the Commander-in-Chief was at the forest clearing where the sapper battalion was waiting for him. After a short consultation with the officers, the Commander-in-Chief finished with the

words, 'Give no warning before destruction, just destroy and be done with it. Forty-five minutes to reach Viinsdorf, twenty-five minutes to perform the operation!'

Bellowing wildly and much the worse for drink, officers were jumping out of the windows, and wild shadows rushing about in the darkness. Tank engines were roaring into life. The noise of crashing was horrible. Everything was falling about. 'It must be war!' was the only thought which coursed simultaneously through a thousand heads.

'I always said that everything would happen exactly as it did in 1941,' shouted a lieutenant-colonel whose left shoulder-strap had been torn off.

Heavy army bulldozers quickly destroyed the fragile glass pavilions, and within a moment the clean little town was filled with dust and the spicy smell of good German beer. By morning, the soft green lawns were all that was left of the former restaurants and beer-houses. The warm summer rain settled the dust, and there was nothing to remind anybody of the night raid by a sapper battalion.

That is how drunkenness in Viinsdorf was eradicated for good. The Head of the Political Directorate delightedly reported to the Chief Political Directorate and to the Central Committee about the remarkable determination of the new Commander-in-Chief in his fight against drunkenness.

Exactly one month later, on the next pay-day, the Chief of the Finance Directorate for that group of troops timidly entered the general's study and reported that there was no money in the till to issue the officers with their salaries.

'Well,' said the Commander-in-Chief, 'write a report and we shall bring the guilty ones to trial before the military tribunal! But what, by the way, is the real reason? Is it because the cashiers have been embezzling?'

'No,' the man from Finance explained shyly, 'we normally receive only a very insignificant part of the necessary money from Moscow. The bulk came from the military trade system - from the beer-houses, is what I mean. The deutschmarks were circulating, we gave them to the officers, they brought them to the beer-houses, we took them back and gave them back to the officers. But now there are no Soviet beer-houses in Viinsdorf, so all the officers are using the German ones, which are fifteen kilometres away. All the marks go there now instead. We have asked Moscow, but Moscow doesn't give us any money.'

The Commander-in-Chief ground his teeth. Then he grabbed the red telephone, the one without the selector dial.

This time the Commander-in-Chief did not himself go to the spot where the sapper battalion was assembling, but sent one of his aides-de-camp instead, with the order: 'Restore all the restaurants and beer-houses in Vunsdorf. You've got a maximum of a fortnight!'

Durov's Way

He pushed the remains of a herring backbone complete with tail up his arse and shouted in tones of mock pathos: 'Comrade officers, don't come near me. I'm a mermaid and I'm shy!'

It happened at a New Year party, during a competition for the most original fancy dress. Senior Lieutenant Durov possessed neither sharp reflexes nor a sense of humour, but when the competition was announced, Durov responded in a flash, if you'll forgive the pun. Apparently he had prepared his act beforehand. The Senior Lieutenant stripped off his guards uniform, and simply donned the aforementioned herring.

Everyone was deeply shocked, regardless of their state of intoxication and an age-old habit in the Soviet Army of never being astonished by anything. The chief of the regimental staff stood up and left the room, banging the door behind him. The other senior officers followed close on his heels.

At the first officers' meeting in the New Year, the commander of the 3rd Battalion tabled a motion that Senior Lieutenant Durov be brought before an officers' court of honour for insulting the regimental staff. This proposal was supported by the chief of staff, the technical deputy regimental commander, the head of artillery and all the battalion commanders, except the 1st, and all the company and battery commanders, except the commander of 3rd Company. There is no prize for guessing that the senior lieutenant served in the 3rd Company, which is part of the 1st Battalion. If a platoon commander is found guilty, it puts a stain on the company's reputation, as well as on the battalion and, of course, on the regiment itself, or, more precisely, on the regimental commander and his political deputy, since it indicates a weak programme of education. This was exactly why the flushed political deputy jumped up and shouted:

'To condemn people, comrades, is the easiest thing in the world but to educate them is far more difficult. Too hasty a decision by us and we could spoil the career of an officer with a bright future before him.'

'His future belongs in a madhouse,' remarked the reconnaissance company commander.

Durov sat in the first row, unconcernedly staring at the dark window. It was all the same to him. The only thing he wanted in the whole world was to have another drink. January had only begun and there was still a long time to wait until pay-day, cherished date the 13th. And they had long since stopped giving him vodka on tick in the small garrison restaurant. Everybody could get vodka on tick but not him: it was a kind of discrimination. He did not care a damn about anything being said at this officers' meeting, only deep down it was all somehow distasteful.

It was not, however, a matter of indifference to the regimental commander. The decision to bring a young officer before an officers' court of honour was a matter for him alone. If he said yes, it would mean that the officers of the regiment would band together and remove one of the stars from the senior lieutenant's shoulder-straps, and they might even remove the shoulder-straps altogether - then you can go anywhere you like, former senior lieutenant, there'll be no pension for you because you are too young, and no future either as you are already too old to begin life anew. The divisional commander, the army commander and the district commander will automatically ratify the decision of the officers' court because, otherwise, the one who approves the decision takes upon himself all future responsibility for faux pas committed by dipsomaniac senior lieutenants. If the regimental commander says no, then the senior lieutenant will go on being educated until the next incident, after which the question of the commander's decision again arises.

A decision in the affirmative is always a painful one to make for every Soviet commander because, basically, his own personal career depends on the extent to which he manages to reduce the number of offences and breaches of discipline, as well as on how well the soldiers make their beds and on how well the fences of the cantonment are kept painted. The actual registration of offences is not governed by the quantity of offences but by the quantity of penalties meted out. Discipline in the Soviet Army is exceptionally low. In many areas, the army amounts almost to an undisciplined herd, precisely because every commander is busy struggling for his own survival. The victor in this endless struggle will be the one who, in general, never punishes his soldiers and officers, irrespective of the kind of offences they have committed. The only department which enforces some form of discipline is the Military Commandant's Office and that is only because its allotted task is to catch any soldiers and officers who might fall within its grasp. The Commandatura offices have another way of operating and a completely different system. Everything there is the other way round. They are anxious to detect as many infringements and breaches

as possible. But, generally, the offices of the Commandatura operate outside military cantonments: in towns, at railway stations and at airports. It is their activities which create the illusion of discipline and order, but when all is said and done it is only an illusion.

The regimental commander had long been awaiting an opportunity to exercise his power, but this particular case was too risky. Discipline in the regiment had anyway already fallen to the lowest possible ebb and to start the new year with such a decision would have been ill-advised. Just suppose something really serious happened tomorrow which it would be impossible to whitewash or hush up. Then what? Then somebody would have to be punished and there would already be two infringements on the statistics. Meanwhile, in other regiments everything would be peace and light.

The commander stood up. To go against the almost unanimous decision of the other officers was not a good idea either, so he said grimly, 'Let's not be hasty: we must think it over.'

And they had to think it over for a very long time indeed.

A week later, the chief of staff telephoned the regimental commander and asked him immediately to forward the papers of his best platoon commander with a view to appointing the latter as a company commander in the neighbouring regiment. In ten minutes flat, the political deputy commander of the 1st Battalion and that of the 3rd Company were in the regimental commander's study.

'Comrade Officers, I have been commanded to send the best of our platoon commanders to the neighbouring regiment to be promoted. I think that Senior Lieutenant Durov will fill the bill. Of course, he does make slips from time to time, but who does not? I think he has fully realised his guilt and that this new responsibility will only help him. Is that not so? Trust does great things for people. With responsibility for a whole company, he will not have time to get drunk. One thing is clear, we must give the man a chance, otherwise he will be pecked to death. Just try telling a man every single day that he is a swine and he will soon start to grunt like a pig!'

The company commander wrote a brilliant character reference for Durov. The battalion commander added: 'I completely endorse these conclusions. Signed Commander of the First Tank Battalion, Guards Lieutenant-Colonel Nesnosnyy.' The regimental commander also agreed: 'Deserves to be nominated for the post of commander of a tank company. Signed Commander of the 210th Guards Tank Regiment, awarded the orders of Bogdan Khmel'nitskiy and Aleksandr Nevskiy, the Port-Arturskiy Regiment, Guards Colonel Zavalishin!'

The political deputy wrote a separate reference relating to Durov's

moral and political qualities: 'Party activist, sportsman, social worker,' and everything else appropriate in such circumstances.

The papers went on their way to divisional staff where they were approved by the commander of the division.

'I've found a real winner to be the commander of the fifth company of the 299th regiment. He's not just an officer but pure gold. A falcon. He's an experienced activist, a sportsman and a social worker. You'll be grateful to me for the rest of your days.'

'And may I ask, Comrade General, who this man is?'

'Senior Lieutenant, what was his name . . . Yes . . . Durov ...'

The Colonel turned pale.

'Are you joking, Comrade General?'

'Why? What's the matter?'

'But I know this Durov like the back of my hand, we live in the same mess. And not only me, but the whole division knows him though they don't live in the same mess with him.'

'Wait, just a moment, it isn't the same Durov who got so drunk that he vomited his insides out at the 7th of November parade?'

'That's the one, Comrade General, and remember also how he once ruined a tank engine, this very same Durov?'

'Well! That's Zavalishin for you, the scoundrel. He must have decided to pull a fast one. But just you wait, I'll make you dance for your pains.'

'Well, Zavalishin, we've confirmed your little falcon as company commander.'

'Thank you, Comrade General.'

'Do you think he'll be able to cope?'

'He's proved his worth, he'll be okay.'

'But Zavalishin, all is not well with discipline at your place, is it? Eh? What?'

'We are doing our best, Comrade General. We didn't start this year too badly and we hope to continue in the same vein.'

'Do you know what occurred to us at Staff HQ? In order not to deprive you of one of your best officers, we decided in the circumstances to leave this excellent fellow, Durov, with your regiment, as commander of the 3rd Company. The neighbouring regiment is in need of a company commander, so we shall give them the present commander of your 3rd Company, and replace him by this same Durov. Let him remain in your regiment. Let him command a company and help to strengthen discipline there.'

And then, suddenly changing his good-humoured banter to those

steely tones employed sometimes by all commanders, the divisional commander announced bluntly: 'The order relating to the switch-over of the said officers was signed today.'

And that is how Guards Senior Lieutenant Durov became commander of the 1st Battalion's 3rd Company of the 210th Guards Tank Regiment. There were practically no changes at all in his lifestyle. The only thing was that his income increased and so consequently did his drinking. Nothing could now be said about the court of honour - since his promotion in itself indicated confidence in him on the part of his superiors and forgiveness of all past sins. Neither the regimental commander, nor his political deputy, nor the battalion commander could possibly complain about Durov or take any steps towards his demotion, because each of them in turn had written such a brilliant character reference. Unquestionably, they must have expected their ruse to be discovered eventually, but they could never have thought that it would happen so soon. If the truth had come to light in, say, a week's time, after Durov's transfer, the commanders of the 210th could have put their hands on their hearts and sworn that to the best of their knowledge he was a good man and that surely something had suddenly gone wrong with him. Generally speaking, of course, subterfuges of this kind produce no complications when an officer is transferred to another town or even to another army or division. There is a cast-iron law: once the order is signed, it's done with! Of course Colonel Zavalishin was well acquainted with all these subtleties, he just did not have the time to wait for another opportunity to transfer Durov to another division. He had to move quickly and take a risk. As things turned out, he risked and lost.

With the appearance of its new commander, discipline in the 3rd Company broke down altogether. Battle-training and battle-preparedness also fell off sharply. The divisional commander, in no mind to forgive and forget what had happened, always hurried to inspect the 3rd Company whenever he visited the 210th Regiment, after which he invariably summoned the regimental and battalion commanders and had long talks with them. He had decided to teach them a lesson. In the end, of course, he would have to remove Durov from the company but for the time being he was in no hurry to do so, and any suggestions about Durov's replacement were invariably dismissed by the divisional commander.

The divisional commander was away on leave and his duties were being performed by his deputy, who had recently arrived from Egypt. The deputy commander had not yet had time to get to know the ropes.

Zavalishin and the battalion commander were both on the prowl,

like caged tigers. The absence of the divisional commander must be quickly and resolutely exploited. Durov must be urgently disposed of. Where to was immaterial - Syria or Hungary, or the Transbaikial region or the far north; promotion or demotion - no matter.

After he had been presented with a dozen bottles of brandy, the chief of the divisional cadres department came up with a piece of advice: Send him to the Academy.

Brilliant character references were again concocted for this best of all company commanders in the 210th Guards Tank Regiment. They were approved by the divisional commander's deputy and urgently despatched to Moscow.

There were only six character references in Durov's personal file: two written at the time of his graduation from military school, two stating that he was the best platoon commander in the regiment, and two stating that he was now the best company commander in the same regiment. The references written at the military school were pale and inconsequential, neither fish, nor fowl nor good red meat (at school he simply had no opportunity to reveal himself as an alcoholic because an officer-cadet's pay is too low), but all the rest of the references were simply brilliant. Within a week, Durov was summoned to Moscow to sit an entrance examination for the Armoured Troops Academy.

'If he fails to get in,' said the regimental commander, biting his nails nervously, 'the divisional commander will have us for breakfast.'

'No, he won't get in, not that bloody alcoholic. How could he?'

'But why not? Maybe he will, idiots are invariably lucky. In any academy, idiots are given preference.'

'We've blundered . . . and how!'

'What do you mean?'

'It's time he was made a captain, and of course we did nothing about it. How can you make a captain out of a man like him? But in the Academy they're bound to harp on about it. Why, they will ask, when you have a company commander with such a distinguished service record, did you not promote him to captain long ago?'

The very next day, a recommendation to confer the rank of captain upon that excellent commander of a tank company, Senior Lieutenant Durov, was urgently despatched to Moscow.

Durov joined the Academy and a month later was promoted to Guards Captain. His unexpected rise could not leave even Durov unimpressed. The psychological shock produced by his elevation suddenly woke in him a superiority complex. He did not stop his drinking, but he did considerably reduce his activity in that direction.

Now, he only drank alone, not so much out of any consideration for safety as out of contempt for his comrades.

His scant intellect never gave birth to a single original idea but he compensated for that by cramming and by learning the academic text books off by heart, thus staggering his professors by the exactness with which he reiterated the thoughts once expressed by these same professors, who had written the books in the first place.

He was held up as an example of a conscientious, competent and contemporary officer. After three years' study he graduated from the Academy with honours (it must here be stated that, to achieve this in the command faculty of the Armoured Troops Academy, one does not need to be very clever; a degree of application is called for and nothing more).

After graduation, Durov duly received the next military rank of major, by order of the Defence Minister himself. Having graduated with honours, he had the right to choose his posting and Durov chose his own regiment.

By order of the Minister of Defence, Guards Major Durov was appointed deputy commander of the 210th Guards Tank Regiment, that same regiment, in which only three and a half years previously, he had merely been the commander of the worst tank platoon. As well as all regimental majors, all nine lieutenant-colonels of the regiment were also subordinate to him, including the chief of staff, the chief of anti-aircraft defence, the chief of the rear column, the technical deputy commander, the commander's deputy and four battalion commanders.

The system of conferring ranks in the Soviet Army differs in many respects from that adopted in other armies. When a vacancy arises, it is not filled by an officer who is senior in rank, with prolonged good service, experience or official position, but by someone who, in the high command's opinion, is most suitable. One consequence of this policy is that high-ranking officers often find themselves directly subordinate to lower-ranking officers.

To quote one example, after the death of Marshal Grechko, Colonel-General Ustinov was appointed to the post of Minister of Defence. Simultaneously with his appointment, Ustinov received the next military rank, that of army general, and all other army generals, marshals and chief marshals of the other arms of the service, even Marshals of the Soviet Union Kulikov, Ogarkov, Sokolov, Batitskiy, Moskalenko and Admiral of the Soviet Fleet Gorshkov, all found themselves directly subordinate to Ustinov.

This system has one unquestionable advantage, which is that it allows 'our people' to be pushed forward without consideration for any laws or regulations. 'In our opinion, this captain is the most capable and he should be put in charge of all the majors.'

Position has an overwhelming advantage over rank. For instance, Major-General Salmanov, Commander of the Kiev Military District, enjoys incomparably greater authority than any colonel-general of a second-rate district like the Ural or Odessa Districts. And a major, who is also the regimental commander's deputy, has many more privileges than a lieutenant-colonel who is the commander of a battalion.

The conferring of ranks depends on the post occupied, on long service and on relations with the higher authority. Army General Ogarkov received the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union on the same day that he became Chief of the General Staff, while his predecessor, Army General Kulikov, only managed to become a Marshal when he left this same post!

To revert to Durov, when the latter returned to his old regiment, the regimental commander, Colonel Zavalishin, had already retired and been replaced by a young lieutenant-colonel from the Chinese frontier. The majority of the officers, however, including the first battalion's commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Nesnosnyy, still remained in their posts.

Yet another entirely objective factor had influenced Durov's rise. During the second half of the 1960s, frontline officers who, after the war, could not make a way for themselves at the Academy reached the peak of their service career at battalion level. They could not be promoted any higher as they had not graduated from the Academy, and to send them to the Academy now would be inexpedient as they were too old. There was also no reason to lower their ranks as all of them were experienced, worthy and disciplined campaigners, while to retire them was also impossible because, after Khrushchev's reforms, the army was terribly short of officers.

The front-line officers had a tight hold at battalion level on the posts of battalion commander and battalion deputy chief of staff, and they thus created a blockage on the promotion ladder. On the one hand, it was absolutely impossible to promote young officers above company level, and on the other hand, there were no replacements for officers retiring at regimental level. That is why many young officers, who managed to join the Academy from company level, returned at regimental level, thus jumping two rungs on the promotion ladder, often those of deputy battalion commander and battalion commander. This was a general phenomenon.

Durov himself was extremely vindictive. He remembered all those who had suggested censuring him before an officers' court of honour, though the one man who spoke out on his behalf also felt the sharp edge of his tongue. He found fault with the smallest, most insignificant detail and berated the guilty party with intolerable abuse. Durov

entered without mercy any error committed by any officer in the officer's personal file, thus destroying that officer's career and deciding his fate for good.

Every officer changed his style, trying not to give Durov any cause to find fault. And it was in this way that the fame of Durov came to spread among higher-ranking officers as an exacting commander of principle. It was not surprising, therefore, that in a couple of years, while he was still only a major, he was given command of a regiment and that, only one year later, as the best of the regimental commanders of our division, he was sent to Syria in the capacity of military adviser to the commander of a Syrian tank division.

I knew Durov for many years and had to serve under his command. I met many officers who knew him at all stages of his career. Those small unwinking snake's eyes and that low threatening whisper still haunt me to this day in my worst dreams.

He had not the slightest idea about army problems or the possibilities of the army's development. However, those dogmas which he had learnt by heart were completely unshakable. The expression of any opinions differing from those expressed in text books written ten years before Durov entered the Academy of Armoured Troops was not only useless but even dangerous.

The way he behaved towards his subordinates could not be called uncultured, it was simply ill-mannered boorishness. We were astonished that he never read any books. We, his subordinates, saw in him only a combination of cruelty, intolerance and bestiality. I have never met anyone who served under his command who had a different opinion of him. But, to the powers-that-be, he was a model of how one's duty should be performed.

He was lucky: throughout the years of his stay in Syria he was never called upon to demonstrate his qualities as a commander in any battle with the enemy. After Syria, Durov's fortunes rocketed. I would not be surprised if, one fine day, I read in the newspaper that Colonel-General Durov has been appointed Commander of the Moscow Military District. That's just the place for the likes of him. They like his sort there, and then again perhaps I underestimate him? Maybe men of his ilk should be promoted higher still?

As a result of the unfortunate experience of the Middle Eastern adventure, the Soviet Army was hurled into the task of building aircraft shelters in the winter of 1967-68. These are my impressions of the Soviet combat airforce.

The Brick Bomber

Good luck fell from the sky.

An American B-29 strategic bomber made a forced landing on Soviet soil. The bomber had been taking part in an air raid against our common enemy, Japan, and after getting shot up in battle somehow managed with great difficulty to reach the nearest airfield - Baranov-skiy near Ussuriysk. The damage was superficial - its wings had been pierced in several places by machine-gun fire from a Japanese fighter, as a result of which the bomber had lost a lot of fuel. The commander had the choice of either bringing the bomber down in the ocean, thus dooming the crew to certain death, or trying to reach a faithful ally, repairing the holes, refuelling the bomber and, in a couple of days, resuming bombing Japan. The captain chose the second alternative. The bomber is worth a fortune, he reasoned, the damage is very slight. The crew is safe, and very experienced, and in war this is probably the most important thing. Why should I let such a crew be eaten by sharks while there is an ally right at hand? That is how the best strategic bomber in the world landed upon Soviet territory.

The news covered the distance from Ussuriysk to the Kremlin, which is all of 10,000 kilometres, clearing all bureaucratic barriers in its path, in a matter of minutes. The event was reported to Josif Vissarionovich Stalin himself while he was in a meeting. Stalin thought for a moment then, having asked only the Politburo members to remain, he passed the news on to them and, with a cunning smile on his face, asked them to give their opinions.

The opinion was unanimous: to detain the bomber for a week under any pretext so as to enable specialists to acquaint themselves with the structure.

'And what if we do not return the bomber at all to our allies?' asked the Great Leader and Teacher, drawing on his pipe.

'The allies will be offended, Comrade Stalin,' Molotov objected cautiously.

'They may stop sending us supplies,' added Kaganovich. 'Then what shall we do without their Studebaker lorries?'

That splendid American army lorry was universally acknowledged as the best military vehicle by everybody from common soldier to marshal. The famous Russian Katyusha BM 13s were mounted exclusively on these American vehicles. The Soviet artillery was the mightiest in the world but its prime mover and ammunition transporter was that same American Studebaker. And, in addition to lorries, the allies supplied much else besides which was very important for the Soviet Army, including means of communication and jeeps, Aircobra fighters, armoured personnel carriers and tanks.

The supply could be stopped at any moment and, with that fact very much in mind, all the Politburo members fell to thinking. Very cautiously, everybody declared themselves against the proposition not to return the bomber. Only Beriya sat silent, trying to guess which way the Great Teacher's mind was inclining.

But the Teacher scoffed at the apprehensions of the Bureau and declared: 'As it is, we shall soon strangle Germany and what will be our next objective? How can we turn against England and America without a strategic bomber? The allies will put up with it,' he added, sucking his pipe. 'They will be a bit agitated for a while and then forget all about it. The bomber must be copied exactly, alike as two peas, and it must fly within the year.'

Beriya energetically supported Stalin while the other members of the Political Bureau readily agreed. They all knew only too well that the basic principle of their Leader and Teacher was that friends and allies should be treated like a woman - the more you beat her, the more she loves you. But every one of them doubted strongly in his heart that the allies would put up with it.

But the allies did put up with it. The American crew was returned, but not the best bomber in the world. The Soviet side did not even bother to invent any kind of explanation. We are not going to return it -full stop. Lease-lend supplies continued as usual because American diplomats were accustomed to discussing problems which arose without regard for questions of military supplies.

A. N. Tupolev, the best Soviet aircraft designer, was put in charge of the copying team and the new Soviet strategic bomber was named, after him, the later TU-4. A further sixty-four design bureaux and scientific research institutes joined in, copying the engines, the fuel and other materials used in the B-29's construction, as well as all its systems of navigation, sighting, internal and external communication network and much else besides. Co-ordination of all the work was entrusted to a member of the Political Bureau, Comrade Lavrenity Pavlovich Beriya,

and the aircraft designer, Yakovlev, was appointed technical consultant. The latter understood Stalin better than anyone else and he knew how to please him.

A huge new workshop was hurriedly built at the restored aircraft factory in Vorohekh where, incidentally, twenty-two years later, the unsuccessful attempt to copy the Concorde was made.

The B-29 was dismantled into thousands of the smallest possible parts, which were distributed among the various ministries, departments, design bureaux and scientific research institutes with the explicit command to copy each detail, aggregate or device and then to embark upon its mass-production within ten months.

The bomber probably received the unfortunate nickname, 'The Brick Bomber', owing to all these small parts and mechanisms being sent all over the Soviet Union. Many years later, in his book *The Aim of Life*, Yakovlev said that in 1945-46 we somehow missed out on the development of jet-propulsion. And, no doubt owing to his inborn modesty, Yakovlev completely forgot to explain why this happened. This was precisely the time when dear Comrades Yakovlev, Beriya and Tupolev were up to their necks creating the 'Brick'. Well might he have missed anything else. 'It must be ready to fly in a year's time' - this was all that Comrade Yakovlev remembered even while he slept.

Indeed, after the TU-4, all unsuccessful aircraft, especially those copied from foreign models, were unofficially nicknamed 'Bricks'. The most famous is, of course, the TU-144 *Koncordskiy*. But, on that occasion, there was no actual model to hand, only a few documents. Maybe also its failure was due to the absence of Lavrentiy Pavlovich's iron fist, without which all technical progress withered.

Difficulties arose from the very beginning of the copying process. To begin with, the use of the metric system of measuring was quite out of the question. If the weight of each rivet is only ten milligrammes less than it should be, it could lead to the whole structure's durability being diminished whereas, if the weight is just a bit greater, it could adversely influence the weight of the whole aircraft. Tupolev knew full well that if the aircraft was to be copied it must be copied in every detail, down to the last rivet, screw, nut and bolt.

Soviet trade representatives in Canada, England and the USA started to buy up measuring equipment in small quantities in order not to create any suspicion. And the retraining of thousands of engineers, technicians and workers, to switch over to calculating in inches, feet and pounds, began urgently.*

*This system of measurement is still used in the Soviet Army.

The training of thousands of crews and tens of thousands of ground staff, engineering and technical personnel for the hundreds of future new bombers began with the same urgency.

How many gallons of fuel would be needed at the normal rate of fuel consumption with no wind for a thousand-mile flight at a height of 30,000 feet? Elementary problems of this kind nonplussed not only the experienced aces, who had been through the whole war, but also the professors of the Aviation Academy.

Pressure in the piping is twelve pounds per square inch - is that a lot or a little?

It may not be so difficult for American and English specialists, accustomed as they are to operating with two different systems of measurement, but for the Soviet specialists it was problem number one. Thousands of mistakes were made and every one of them was mercilessly punished.

While the new system of measurement was becoming accepted in the Soviet aviation industry as a whole, another no less complicated problem emerged, that of keeping the secret, because in the eyes of the KGB anyone who displayed any knowledge of English measuring systems might easily be a potential carrier of State secrets to the enemy.

Everybody who saw Tupolev at that time remarked upon his gaiety and rather childlike, carefree attitude. Apparently, the old man was tormented by jealousy. He loved and yet he detested the B-29 and he tried to hide it from the others. The mechanical work of copying was sickening him and he concealed the fact under a mask of indifference. Tupolev had no problems then, solving with ease even the most complicated.

A little hole was found on the left wing of the aircraft. No aerodynamics or durability expert had the slightest idea what the hell it was for. There was no tube or wire attached to it and there was no equivalent hole in the right wing. The opinion of a commission of experts was that the little hole had been bored by a factory drill at the same time as the other holes for the rivets. So, what to do? Most probably, the hole had been drilled by mistake, and later no one had bothered to fill it in as it was much too small. The chief designer was asked his opinion.

'Do the Americans have it?'

'Yes.'

'So why the hell are you asking me? Weren't we ordered to make them absolutely identical! Alike as two peas?'

So, for that reason, a very small hole indeed, made with the thinnest possible drill, appeared on the left wing of all the TU-4 strategic bombers.

Here's a narrow pipe, through which one can crawl on all fours the whole length of the aircraft, and it has been painted light green (some design bureau or other struggled for a very long time in an attempt to copy it exactly) but, at its very end, several metres have been painted white. Maybe some soldier simply did not have enough paint. But the order was to copy it exactly, which is why all the Soviet bombers are the same colour as the American one. It was calculated exactly how much green paint there was and how much white paint. Later, this ratio was included in all instruction books on how to paint the interior of the bomber.

Meanwhile, another two B-29s made forced landings on Soviet territory. It was discovered that there was no hole in their wings, while the paint on one of them was light green and that on the other white. The chief designer was again asked what to do. But, once again, Tupolev had no problem. He had been ordered to copy the bomber which had landed first, and there were no orders concerning the others. So just go on copying!

It was later discovered, from the factory number, that the aircraft which had landed first had been built earlier than those which landed subsequently. It was therefore decided to follow the first model without a single deviation. Gradually, the number of problems started to decrease. Everybody got accustomed to the chief designer's standard answer, to do everything as it was on the first American aircraft. No one asked questions anymore. A little anecdote grew up. The question was, what kind of stars should be put on the mass-produced aircraft - white American stars or red Soviet ones? It was this question that completely foxed Tupolev. If you put white American stars, you risk being shot as an enemy of the people. And, if you put red Soviet ones, first it will not be a copy, and second maybe the Supreme Commander-in-Chief wishes to use the bombers against America, England or China and therefore keep the American markings. The question about the stars was the only one which Tupolev ever addressed to Beriya throughout the whole period of copying, pointing out to him that this was not a designer's business. Beriya was equally nonplussed. He was not accustomed to asking Stalin questions. He had risen to the very top precisely because, like any dog, he could anticipate the wishes of his master.

People say that Beriya told Stalin about the stars as if it was a funny story and that by the way in which Stalin laughed at the joke Beriya knew unerringly which stars should be used. This last problem was solved and mass-production started.

A 'golden rain' fell upon all those who had taken part in the creation of the 'Brick Bomber'. Ninety-seven prizes were distributed over a short period of time 'for the development of new battle technology'. In addition to which Beriya, Tupolev and Yakovlev all received the Order of Lenin.

Part Four

Tension was building up in Czechoslovakia. Because of this, our training division held an extra pre-term graduation of students. They were replaced by other cadets in a pre-call up age group. The word 'training' disappeared from the division's title and henceforth it was designated only as the Novograd-Volynsk Motor-Rifle Division. The Ukraine. Beginning of summer 1968.

Preparation

The devil only knew what was going on with the armoured troop carriers. The standard allocations for every motor-rifle regiment should be 31 tanks, 6 howitzers, 18 mortars and 103 armoured personnel carriers. Tanks, howitzers and mortars were all in order, but there was only a total of 40 armoured personnel carriers. Trouble was obviously in the air. Something similar had happened in brotherly Hungary in 1956 and was obviously about to happen in brotherly Czechoslovakia. It was obvious that we would have to help. But how could we with such a shortage of basic armament such as armoured personnel carriers in our motor-rifle regiment?

After our third glass together, I put this question to a captain whom I had known at military school and who now occupied the post of Assistant Chief of Staff for Mobilisation. The captain regarded me attentively and, it seemed to me at the time, a trifle foxily, and then said vaguely, 'Hm . . . m,' filled up our glasses, ate a piece of cucumber and suddenly asked:

'But do you know why we've got any at all in our regiment?'

'What an odd question. We've got them because they're prescribed under our allocation, the only thing is that there aren't enough of them to go round.'

'We've got them in our regiment because once a year they take part in a parade at Kiev. Thirty-six of them are needed in the parade and that's why our regiment has them. The other four are just in reserve.'

Apparently the captain rightly felt that he had not satisfactorily dealt with my question, so he asked me another leading question.

'Do you know how many motor-rifle regiments there are in our district?'

'Of course not!'

'But approximately. Just try to guess without being too exact.'

'Well, if only approximately . . . First there's a tank army and two all-arms armies. That makes. . .ah. . .ah. . .six tank divisions and eight to ten motor-rifle divisions.'

'Right!'

'That makes twenty-six to twenty-eight tank regiments and thirty to thirty-six motor-rifle regiments.'

'Right again. So then, of all the district's motor-rifle regiments, out of all thirty to thirty-six, only our regiment has forty armoured personnel carriers, and all the others haven't got a single one.'

'Go on, that's a lie,' I blurted out.

'I'm not lying.'

I was certain that the captain knew his job, and I knew he wasn't lying. I also knew for certain that two other regiments in our division had no armoured personnel carriers. But I did not want to believe that our regiment was the only one in the whole district which had any at all.

'Then where are they?' I finally asked. 'In Egypt? Or, to be more exact, in Israel?'

'Yes, there are some there but not very many. Israel captured a lot of tanks and artillery but no armoured personnel carriers.'

'But where are they then? Were they given to the Warsaw Treaty Powers?'

'Yes, but very few. Czechoslovakia, which receives nearly all its armament from us, still produces her own armoured personnel carriers, to her own standard specifications, and supplies them to the Germans and the Poles, while the Rumanians, because they're so poverty-stricken, usually transport their motor-infantry in ordinary lorries.'

'But when all's said and done, where are ours then?'

'Nowhere!' He looked at me searchingly and repeated 'Nowhere. They don't exist!'

'But how so?'

'Just like that. How many of them did we produce before or during the war? Not one - not a single one. Isn't that so? All the armoured personnel carriers were American.'

'That's right,' I agreed. 'M-3s they were called, half-tracked, and there were some others with wheels and they were American too.'

'And now let me ask you another question. How many types of armoured personnel carriers have we produced throughout the whole of our history?'

'Lots! Let me see. There were the BTR-40 and BRDM.'

'No, we can't count those, they were only reconnaissance machines and not infantry ones.'

'Of course,' I agreed. 'We won't count them.'

'We don't count the BTR-50 either.'

No, that armoured personnel carrier could not be included in our calculation. It is a splendid machine, but apparently much too good for us.

There is only one of them in each regiment and then only for the use of the regimental commander himself. The chief of the regimental staff and the commander of the artillery and regimental reconnaissance are considered as part of the hierarchy, but even in battle they have to travel on ordinary lorries. The BTR-50 is solely for the regimental commander, so it cannot be considered as an infantry armoured personnel carrier. In fact, one regiment of the Taman division was fully supplied with the BTR-50P, but they were only for parades. The whole army knows that this regiment has never taken part in any real manoeuvres but only in peep-shows, like all other 'court' divisions.

'We can't count the BMP either,' continued the captain. 'For a start, it has only recently appeared and second the BMP is not the BTR and its existence does not solve the problems of transporting infantry during battle. The BMPs were supplied only to some selected, privileged infantry units. What about the others, the majority of the ones who'll actually decide the outcome of any war? What will we transport them on during the war? ... So then, how many types of armoured personnel carriers have we actually created throughout our whole history?' he repeated his question.

Two,' I answered, and blushed, 'The BTR-152 and BTR-60P.'

'You do know, of course, what kind of armoured personnel carriers they are?'

Unfortunately, I did know that the BTR-152 was the very first Soviet armoured personnel carrier. It was a simple lorry, a ZIS-152 with armoured plating fixed on top. The BTR-152 was a copy of that splendid American lorry, the Studebaker. The copy, as distinct from the original, was not a success and, after another five tons of armour had been added, it looked like anything on earth but a battle machine. It was impracticable, it lacked manoeuvrability and speed, and had no armoured protection. In addition it was produced by the same factory which produced the ZIS-151. And this factory has many problems. Either brotherly China needs machines, or brotherly Indonesia, or brotherly Korea, or brotherly Albania, and we need machines ourselves either for the undeveloped areas or for the Bratsk Hydro Electric Station.

The second Soviet armoured personnel carrier, the BTR-60P, was developed to replace the first one, though there was really nothing to replace as the overwhelming majority of the Soviet divisions only possessed them in theory anyway. This new armoured personnel carrier had the shape of a coffin and it was never known by any other name except the 'coffin on wheels'.

Owing to the shortage of diesel fuel in the country the BTR-60P, like its predecessor, was powered by petrol and as a result burned in battle

with an especially bright flame. But diesel fuel was not the only problem - when it was built the country did not possess a single really strong and reliable petrol engine, so two weak engines from the normal collective farm lorry, the GAZ-51, were installed in the BTR-60P. So, it began life with two engines, two clutches, two transmissions, two distributors, four transmission boxes, two starters and two distributor and contact-breaker units. Of course, all these mechanisms were neither reliable nor synchronised, and when the synchronisation of the two engines broke down, which happened every day, one of the engines started to throttle the other. So, one of the engines had to be urgently disconnected, and then the 'coffin on wheels', weighing twelve tons, was hardly able to move on the one 90 horsepower engine.

The letter P in the BTR-60P stands for amphibious. And, although the coffin's shape gives it some buoyancy, even so it floats only in theory. The armoured personnel carrier goes bravely into the water and doesn't swim too badly, but it can hardly ever get out of the water under its own steam since its weak engines can only turn either the wheels or the screw propeller, but not both simultaneously. As it leaves the water, the propeller screw is no longer effective in the shallows, and the wheels don't have sufficient grip on the ground. If the engines did operate simultaneously, it might somehow be able to clamber out but, as it is, when faced with even a small river the whole of the infantry remains without means of transport and reserve supplies.

The BTR-60P is produced by the Gorkiy car factory, which, as well as its own army, must also supply the whole of the national economy and all the Soviet bureaucrats with personal cars. In addition, all Soviet taxi-cabs without exception are produced exclusively by the same works, plus supplies for brotherly Egypt, brotherly Chile, brotherly Sudan, brotherly Somalia and many more besides. And there is still only one Gorkiy works!

'So we should build more car works!'

At this remark he smiled, but not without a certain malice.

'We would if we could but, as it is, we are compelled to buy from Italy! Up to now, we have not built one single automobile factory ourselves.'

I was forced to agree with him. True, I had only visited a Soviet car works once in my life but it had produced a very bad impression on me. Its equipment had been built in America in 1927 and sold to Germany, where throughout the whole pre-war period as well as during the war it had been used mercilessly, to the point of exhaustion. In 1945, this completely worn out and damaged equipment was transported to the Soviet Union where construction of Moskvich cars started. This Moskvich factory does not anticipate replacing its equipment before the year

2000. And what will really happen then remains to be seen! But it is highly probable that yet one more record will be established in the Soviet Union.

'But how, Captain, shall we be able to save Czechoslovakia?'

'By pure cheek, as usual! Of course we've got armoured personnel carriers in the front-line troops, in the GDR, in Poland and in the frontier districts. But here, in the rear, in the second and third echelons, we must just make a lot of noise and generally demonstrate our readiness.'

'But what if the war does really start? What if the Americans really do intervene?'

'Don't worry! Nobody will ever intervene. They'll put up with anything. The more impudent we get, the more patient they will be. Of course they'll hurl stones at our embassies but later they'll repair everything at their own expense, down to the very last penny, and then the usual improvement in international relations will start and in a week's time everything will be forgotten. It is in their government's interest to allow things to be forgotten as soon as possible. Well, let's have one last drink and that's that. Mobilisation will start soon.'

The 1968 mobilisation went on openly without any attempt at camouflage. First, the press announced large-scale exercises, then the call-up of the reservists followed and, when the exercises were over, the reservists remained in the army.

Large-scale exercises involving the strategic rocket troops were carried out over some months, then there were naval exercises, and exercises for anti-aircraft defence and of the military air force, as well as countless exercises for the armies and divisions of the land forces. Then followed training of liaison forces, during which all elements connected with the direction of a gigantic army were checked; and there was training of rear forces, during which thousands of tons of ammunition and tens of thousands of tons of fuel were moved to the western frontiers; and finally command-staff training took place on Czech territory, and all commanders down to battalion and, in some cases, company level studied their tasks actually in situ, in the event of an invasion. All this looked very impressive from the outside. But from the inside it looked rather different.

The process of complete mobilisation of any army consists firstly in bringing the existing units, sub-units and formations up to strength, secondly in forming new ones, and thirdly in their training and knitting together into overall battle preparedness.

The process of bringing our division up to strength proceeded generally without any special difficulties. In peacetime, most Soviet

divisions have a reduced personnel, for instance each artillery crew, instead of seven men, has only two - the commander and the gun-layer - and on mobilisation the vacancies are filled by reservists. Even in those cases where they have not even served in the army for ten years and have forgotten absolutely everything - after a short training period, they are fully prepared for war. The same thing happens with the infantry, tank-men, sappers, etc. In a far worse position, at times of mobilisation, are the units of liaison, air defence missiles, anti-tank rockets, reconnaissance and chemical warfare. After a full four months of training, all these units were still not ready for battle.

In official terminology, as we have seen, divisions with reduced personnel are called Kadrirovannye. And this really is a fact, especially for units where the percentage of reservists is very high. For instance, in our tank battalion there were three men to every tank instead of four - the loader was missing. When he was added to the crew, the tank promptly became ready for battle. In all remaining tank battalions - and there are seven of them in every motor-rifle division - there was only one man in each tank - the driver. There were only twelve men in a company: the commander of the company, a captain and ten drivers. At mobilisation all the missing members, gunners, loaders, tank commanders, even the company sergeant-major and the platoon commanders, came from the reservists. All except the platoon commanders had served in tank units five or ten years previously, sometimes in other types of tanks. But the platoon commanders had never served anywhere before and knew nothing, not only about tanks and contemporary techniques and tactics, but about the army in general. The platoon commanders are all former students, who once upon a time in some civilian institution attended a course of lectures on military questions and on graduating received the rank of reserve junior lieutenant.

After four months of intensive training, only one tank battalion in seven, the one which had reservists only as loaders, was accepted as being ready for battle. If war had started then, the division would not, of course, have had four months for training, but only one to two weeks maximum. It would have been thrown into battle and would have been destroyed. And no wonder, since only one out of every seven battalions would be fighting fit. Now just imagine a division without reconnaissance, without liaison, without a communications network and without anti-aircraft and anti-tank rockets!

But the biggest problems lay with the infantry - not only because in peacetime its cadres are reduced by an even greater extent, nor because the infantry is recruited from among the worst soldiers, who very often do not understand either their commanders or one another. The worst fact of all is that the infantry has no support technology. A motor-rifle

division should have 410 armoured personnel carriers and we had only forty - and that was in our special parade regiment. In the other regiments of the division, in other divisions of the army and in the other armies of the district, there were none whatsoever. Many regiments had three to four armoured personnel carriers for battle training but even these immediately became the personal machines of the battalion commanders, thus leaving nothing at all for the battalion.

Of course, in case of necessity, the infantry can be transported by lorries. But there were no lorries either. The lorries which were in moth-balls in our division were only sufficient for two battalions. The third battalion was issued with armoured personnel carriers, and the remaining six battalions had to make do with vehicles received only on mobilisation.

All Soviet civilian cars are military-registered. If you buy a Volga car, you are warned that at any moment it may be requisitioned for military purposes. This includes dump-trucks, taxis and petrol-tankers. Each and every one of them is specially registered and, at mobilisation, goes straight into the army. At mobilisation, the whole country's national economy comes to a standstill because all the cars, tractors, bulldozers, cranes and excavators - all go into the army. It is difficult to say who created such folly. The system has existed for a long time but it could pass muster in the 1930s and 40s when the country was still able to feed itself, when even at times of general famine some food reserves still existed, when the basic means of transportation in a village was the horse. But now, when the country is unable to feed itself, when it has no food reserves (as was demonstrated to the whole world in October 1964), and when the national economy has no more horses, it is complete madness to take away all the men, all the tractors and all the cars simultaneously. Those who plan any future war must, in these conditions, count on a sudden, short, lightning war, using nuclear force within the first few minutes, or anticipate defeat if the war lasts longer than one month.

Meanwhile, the division began to receive these mobilised machines. What we actually got was a sheer mockery. These were machines which had entered the army long ago directly from the works. The majority of machines absorbed by the army are put into long-term moth-balling. Ten years later, they become normal working army machines whereupon new machines replace them in the moth-balls. After three, four and sometimes five years of vicious use, in adverse conditions and on appalling surfaces, the machines are deemed to be totally useless for further exploitation. Only then do they go to

agriculture, though every one of them remains on the military register and has to be returned to the army in case of mobilisation.

In 1968, before Czechoslovakia, we were issued with machines built in 1950 and 1951. During their lifetime, Malenkov had replaced Stalin, Khrushchev had replaced Malenkov, and Brezhnev had replaced Khrushchev. During their lifetime, the Soviet Union had performed a titanic leap into space with the Sputnik and Gagarin (but then, having used all the advantages of surprise as well as of captured German technology, had refused to participate further in the space race). But these superannuated vehicles remained, like old spinsters still waiting for their day to dawn. And now indeed their hour had at last come!

After receiving its 'battle technology', the infantry was forbidden to leave the cover of the forests. On the roads and fields, only tank crews, the artillery and one parade battalion of armoured personnel carriers were training. All the remainder were standing along forest cuttings and in forest clearings. Viewed from outer space, it must have looked menacing, but not from the ground. The military hierarchy was afraid of frightening the locals by the look of our army: fat, untrained and undisciplined soldiers, who had forgotten all they ever knew, in old worn-out vehicles of all possible types and painted all the colours of the rainbow.

The Soviet military leaders must be given their due. None of these 'wild divisions' ever appeared in Europe, or even moved in daytime over Soviet territory. But their very existence gave the Soviet Union a considerable advantage. From outer space, the Americans saw new divisions increasing like fungi. Their reconnaissance noted mighty tank columns on the roads and calculated that innumerable infantrymen lay hidden in the forests. And so it was, in fact, but this infantry was neither organised nor controlled and, what is most important of all, was incapable of fighting.

After the first stage of mobilisation - the bringing up to strength of the existing units - the second stage started: the development of the new units, sub-units and formations.

The reservists continued to arrive, and 'battle vehicles' as well. The units were becoming swollen and, one beautiful night, the order was received to divide into two. The deputy divisional commander became the commander of the new division, while the deputy chief of staff became the chief of staff. Battalion commanders became commanders of regiments, and company commanders became commanders of battalions. The only pity was that platoon commanders, former students, who had never seen a real army, also became company commanders. And reservists were pushed up to become platoon commanders.

After this splitting into two, every division and every regiment started

once more the process of bringing itself up to strength, though this time with even older reservists and vehicles. The number of reservists became a real threat, and the army totally lost its professional face. Of course all this did not happen within the divisions intended for the seizure of Czechoslovakia, or if it did happen, it did so to a much smaller degree. But it did not make our position any easier. Those divisions, too, had to be brought up to strength somehow, and suddenly we saw with horror that, from what had already become our two divisions, they were starting to take away, little by little, both men and machines; and of course they were the best men and the best machines which were taken. From the tank crews created with such difficulty, they started to take away combat soldiers, replacing them with simple reservists.

In a couple of days, this wave reached us. We were ordered to get ready to send twenty of our forty armoured personnel carriers to the Carpathian Military District. The next day, twelve of our regular young officers received orders transferring them to the same district. And after that the process really snowballed. There was more news every day: all the tank drivers were taken away, the regular liaison men and the regimental chief of staff went too. It was our second month in the forest. Reservists were still joining us; discipline was lapsing. In early June, an order was received for the creation of field tribunals in each division. It was about this time that the number of 'wild divisions' had so increased and each of them was so drained by the constant departure of regular officers, sergeants and soldiers, that it had become impossible to govern this horde other than through field tribunals.

In a short while, the tribunals restored order, but not troop training. Every day, training sessions were going on. New difficulties arose in our regiment. After sending away half our armoured personnel carriers, we only had twenty left. The commanders of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions were given two each, so that left only sixteen in the 1st Battalion: and they were divided, as between brothers, one to the battalion commander and five to each company. A company consists of seventy-six men. Each armoured personnel carrier accommodates fifteen men apart from the driver, so everybody had his place, in theory at least. In practice the first armoured personnel carrier goes to the company commander, and with him travel his political deputy, the medical instructor, the company's machine-gun section with a very large provision of cartridges, and the sergeant-major with all the company's belongings. The commander's armoured personnel carrier is not only absolutely full on the inside, outside it is hung about with all manner of cases, casks and canisters.

For the three remaining platoons, consisting of twenty-two men

each, there were four carriers: one for each platoon, and one to be shared between them. The fact that, in battle, the platoons and sections would all be torn to pieces, perturbed no one at all because, for the moment, one must not think about the battle, but how to accommodate men in armoured personnel carriers. Nobody would give us any additional machines, even if they were broken down and worn out. Where were they to come from? And, even so, our regiment was the luckiest in the three armies of the district. This had to be appreciated. No one else had such privileges.

So, in each armoured personnel carrier accommodating fifteen men, we had to put sixteen - that wasn't really too bad. During training, we used to transport far more than that. We managed about thirty men and even that wasn't too bad! But training and pre-battle conditions are two different things. In pre-battle conditions, every armoured personnel carrier, in addition to all infantry armament, also has one grenade-launcher RPG-7 with ten grenades, and ten grenades constitute two big cases. In addition there are twenty hand grenades, F-1s, which means another case, and one machine-gun, the SGMB, with 2,000 cartridges, which means another two cases. An armoured personnel carrier must also have two additional fuel tanks, which are suspended on top of the spare wheel, and can only be accommodated on the armoured roof, after which one of the hatches will not open. Then, in addition, every soldier carries on his person an automatic rifle or machine-gun or a grenade-launcher, 300 cartridges for every automatic rifle and 1,000 cartridges for every hand machine-gun. Every soldier also has two grenades, a bayonet, a gas-mask, protective rubber overalls, anti-nuclear rubber boots and gloves, greatcoat, rain cape and ground sheet, a change of underwear, rations for five days, a water bottle, a spade, and individual medicine and anti-nuclear pack. When all this is put into an armoured personnel carrier, there is no room left for one person, let alone sixteen. It was much better before, when armoured personnel carriers had no armoured roof and one could put everybody one on top of the other like peasant wenches on a hay-cart. After Hungary, the production of such armoured personnel carriers was stopped. Now we have to push all sixteen in through the hatches under the carrier's roof.

This is not an easy task, especially if you take into consideration the reservists' corpulence. The sergeants just have to hammer them in under the roof. Sometimes, this operation takes about forty minutes. If something happens, if the machine overturns or catches fire, no one, except the driver and the commander whose positions are separated from the others, will get out alive. We are not even talking about the battle itself. How do they breathe there, squashed together worse than

sardines in a tin? The soldier's good sense, however, soon finds a way out of that situation. Everyone puts on his gas-mask after disconnecting the filter container from the pipe; then the pipes are fed out through the open hatches and embrasures. During the summer it is not very pleasant in a rubber mask, pressed from all sides by backs, bottoms, boots, barrels and butts, but at least there is air to breathe.

During training exercises, especially when overseas attaches are present, things happen quite differently. Exercises are one thing, especially peep-shows, while harsh army reality is another matter altogether.

Late one evening, after the usual training practice of loading soldiers into armoured personnel carriers, which left no time for any other type of training, I received an order to go immediately to the staff of the Carpathian Military District. My post was to be taken by the 1st platoon commander, a junior lieutenant-reservist. When he heard about his appointment as a company commander, he looked sadly at our armoured personnel carriers, at the reservists, whom the sergeants were extricating with great difficulty from the hatches, then he gave a long-drawn-out whistle and swore loud and long.

The hurricane of transfer, re-groupings, re-formations and bringing up to strength caught me too up in its wake and hurled me into the 2nd Battalion of the 274th Regiment of the 24th Samaro-Ulyanovsk, Berdychev, Iron, three times holder of the Red Banner and holder of the Order of Suvorov and Bogdan Khmel'nitskiy, Motor-Rifle Division of the 38th Army, which forms part of the Carpathian Military District.

Liberators

What a thrilling sight the changing of the guard at the Mausoleum is! I've been to Red Square hundreds of times and I'm still lost in admiration at their accuracy and military bearing. I am simply drawn there and could stand for hours feasting my eyes.

And how could it be otherwise? The very cream of the cream, trained to the point of artistry, trained better than Soviet gymnasts for the Olympic games. Handsome fellows.

Their regiment is stationed within the Kremlin Walls, a whole regiment of the KGB! Just go round from the side of the Aleksandrov-skiy garden and count the storeys in their barracks. It looks like two, but if you look more closely there are really four. The windows are too vast and there are two storeys to each window. Look carefully and you will see that there are indeed four. They extend above the Kremlin wall. And how many storeys are covered by this wall? Now go inside the Kremlin itself and look at the barracks from the side of the Tzar Bell and you will see that it is not just an ordinary house but a huge rectangular construction with an inner courtyard. Now go out again through the Troitskie gates into the Aleksandrovskiy garden and try to calculate the length of this building by pacing it out. So, there you are -not just a regiment but something far bigger can be accommodated in there, without tanks and artillery, of course.

And now, any Sunday, go towards the Kremlin and see how many of these lads are just strolling around aimlessly. But the regimental commander can only give leave to five per cent at any one time: that goes for the commander of an ordinary regiment, but the one in the Kremlin is no ordinary regiment. And, even if the commander allows only five per cent of his eagles to go in to town to enjoy themselves, there must still be plenty left in the Kremlin. And if it's not five, but

only two to three per cent we're seeing, then how many of them have been left inside?

The lads strut up and down importantly and they look very proud. And why shouldn't they be proud? Their uniform is most imposing: greatcoats, caps, boots - all officers' issue. They have blue shoulder-straps with the letters 'GB' shining like gold. But why not 'KGB', why only 'GB'? It needs to be explained. 'K' stands for Committee. That's certainly not solid enough. 'MGB' would be better ('M' could mean Ministry), but 'GB' is best. It stands for State Security - plain and simple! How weighty it sounds, how imposing! It takes precedence over all ministries and committees, including even the Central Committee of the Party. 'GB' is a crystal-clear dream. But not only a dream of course.

So they are the cream of the cream. A whole regiment, lacking only tanks and artillery. But the tanks would not really be necessary - the Kremlin's walls are still strong.

But suppose something happens, some kind of revolution breaks out, especially one by the army with tanks against the Leninist Central Committee? What then?

Don't worry on that score, brother: there is a whole Dzerzhinskiy Division created for just such an eventuality, with tanks and artillery and everything else which may be required. Of course it is true that the division is called a Division of Internal Troops, which means that it is part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. But don't you believe in such a masquerade. The KGB has used plenty of disguises in its time! So, don't give a glance at the Dzerzhinskiy Division's uniform. It's indeed a masquerade! Since when did the protection of our beloved leaders fall into the hands of the MVD? It has always been the KGB's prerogative: that's why this division was created. This is what is written in all the reference books raised on Lenin's personal instructions and for Lenin's personal protection. But then you have Comrade Roy Medvedev writing about the protection of our beloved Lenin, and the existence of the Dzerzhinskiy Division is somehow forgotten. In contrast, the division itself is very proud indeed of its role: 18,000 men guarding one man, Lenin. The Latvian riflemen pride themselves on their role just as much as the Moscow Military School named after the Supreme Soviet, and the Kremlin machine-gun detachments - just see how many of them there are.

In addition to the Dzerzhinskiy, the KGB possesses other regiments and divisions. All are made up of the very best soldiers, and there are a great many of them. Some liaise with all ministries and departments, with all republics, territories and regions, with all test-firing grounds, space centres, prisons and camps, with works, factories, mines and

pits, with all military districts, armies, corps and divisions and, of course, with the brotherly socialist parties. And there is liaison within liaison: cables, switchboards, cypher machines, eavesdropping posts. And all such things have to be built, maintained and guarded; and all this needs troops, troops and more troops. The very best ones, of course. Because every day one is forced to hear secrets and tell no one. And, even though the secrets are far from comforting, one is not allowed either to hang oneself, or to run away to America. And so many soldiers are needed for this job! But it is still not the Soviet Army nor is it the Defence Ministry. These same troops eavesdrop and report even on what is said within the Defence Ministry. And that is not the end of it, that is not even the main arm of strength of the KGB. The frontier troops - there lies their strength, and they control nine districts! All the rest of the Soviet Army has only sixteen military districts. There are nine frontier districts controlled by KGB troops, with tanks, helicopters, artillery and warships.

Each one is, of course, made up of the best crack troops, since a frontier guard was invented specifically to prevent anyone from running away from this splendid society of ours. But he is not guarded by anyone. He stands on the very frontier itself: one step sideways and he is over the border. So, to prevent that, the very best soldiers are chosen for all nine KGB districts.

All those who have not eventually landed up in this gigantic organisation go into the Internal Troops. This too does not come under the Defence Ministry but under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It is still not the army although it has regiments, divisions, tanks and guns.

'What are you doing, brothers?'

'Guarding a camp!'

'Well, it's a necessary job, responsible too. How many people are there there?'

'Oh, there are a lot of people. Under just one law, the one about the intensification of the struggle against hooliganism, over the last ten years, eight million people have been imprisoned. But there are many other decrees and laws leading to imprisonment. We have to guard all those people.'

'And I suppose they take on only the very best for this job.'

'Of course. They need people who have never themselves been convicted, nor anyone in their families. And also those, who, after being in contact with the prisoners, don't pick up any wrong ideas, and if they do happen to pick up any ideas they should not absorb them, and if they do happen to absorb them, they must not disseminate what they've picked up from the prisoners, or in any case not disseminate it too widely.'

'But where can you find such people?'

'Well, we do our best.'

So then, those who have landed up neither in the GB nor the Internal Troops - they are the ones who join the invincible and legendary Soviet Army.

Every self-respecting army consists of three types of armed forces, each of which is split into different kinds of troops. The Soviet Army has more respect for itself than all the others and, therefore, does not consist of three but of five arms. In addition to the land forces, the air force and the navy, there are two other branches of equal importance, the anti-aircraft defence troops and the strategic rocket troops. And, in addition to all these, there are also the VDV or airborne forces, which are not separate but are answerable solely to the Defence Minister and commanded by an army general. And the VDV consists of eight divisions, no less, whereas the whole of the British Army, for instance, consists of four divisions: three divisions in Germany, and one actually in the United Kingdom. When one compares these simple statistics, one's ideas about the aggressiveness of NATO tend somewhat to fade.

So the VDV are selected also from the best soldiers, the most courageous, the most convinced, developed and physically strong. They would have to be: jumping in all weathers, often at night, operating in the enemy's rear against its most important targets; completely isolated from their own troops, without any supplies of ammunition, fuel, food, and without their wounded being evacuated. Paratroopers must kill their own wounded, so they are never taken prisoner and give away the operation's plans and intentions. The air descent must always be a surprise attack.

Those who have not been taken into the VDV join the strategic rocket troops or RVSN. Again, they need the very best. The real question is: how many of these crack soldiers are really required for the RVSN? The RVSN has three armies altogether: every army consists of a number of corps, and every corps of several divisions. So, it would be futile to make any comparison with the British Army.

After the RVSN, it is the turn of the country's anti-aircraft defence. That requires enormous numbers of soldiers and, again, all of them must be the best. They are intended to deal with sputniks, intercontinental ballistic and other missiles, and strategic bombers. The country's anti-aircraft defence consists of three types of troops: air force, air-rocket and radio-technical troops. The anti-aircraft air force possesses the fastest aircraft-interceptors. The radio-technical troops operate thousands of locators which guard the sky day and night. Finally, there are the air-rocket troops. All three arms are concentrated in two districts, Moscow and Baku, and each district forms a group of armies for anti-aircraft defence. But, apart from these two districts,

there are also several separate anti-aircraft defence armies, which are directly subordinate to the Anti-Aircraft Defence Commander-in-Chief.

Next comes the air force, which is not to be confused with the anti-aircraft defence air force. In general the air force, or to be more exact the VVS, or military air force, has nothing in common with the anti-aircraft defence air force. The VVS has many air armies, ranging from a front-line force through the strategic air corps known in Soviet terminology as the long-range air force, to the divisions of military transport aviation. Each front-line army consists of six divisions, and the corps of long-range aviation have two to three divisions each. Without doubt, the air force must have the best soldiers.

The navy comes next. It, too, is huge. It has a colossal number of strategic rockets, and the demands made on the sailors operating them are extremely high, because the launching of a rocket from a submarine underwater is so complicated. The navy also has its own anti-aircraft defence and a mighty air force separate from the VVS and the country's anti-aircraft defence. And, of course, the cleverest, the most literate, the boldest and most resolute, the strongest and the sturdiest, are essential. And everything that's left goes into the land forces!

The best are sent abroad: let the liberated admire their liberators! The best are needed there so that our reputation in Europe is not spoiled. That is perfectly understandable. But how many soldiers are needed to be sent into liberated Europe? Let us take, for instance, West Germany and its fierce Bundeswehr, with which, in the Soviet Union, they frighten everybody from pioneers to pensioners. Well, that Bundeswehr has twelve divisions. Against these twelve divisions, we maintain five armies in the field and one air army from the VVS. These six armies are called the GSVG - The Group of Soviet Troops in Germany. But, apart from the GSVG, there is the Northern Group of Troops, which are the Soviet forces in Poland, the Central Group in Czechoslovakia, and the Southern Group in Hungary. And these four groups must be made up of the very best soldiers. It was not for nothing that the poet Yevtushenko composed a song:

It's not only for their Country The soldiers perished in
that war But to provide quiet sleep At night over the
whole World.

So, Europe can rest in peace - our armies and their crack soldiers will never leave it. We like Europe!

Those young soldiers, who for some reason have not joined the hundreds of thousands of picked troops in liberated Europe, go into the

land forces at home actually on Soviet territory. It must be said that the remaining soldiers are very good, though perhaps not as perfect as for instance those in State Security, the Frontier Troops of the KGB, the Internal Troops of the MVD, the Airborne Forces, the Strategic Rocket Troops, the Anti-Aircraft Defence, the Navy, the Group of Soviet Troops in Germany, the Central Group of Troops, the Northern Group of Troops or the Southern Group of Troops. They are, of course, first class, but not of quite the same calibre.

The Soviet Army Land Forces, representing sixteen districts, is a gigantic organism. Neither China, nor America, nor anyone else, not even all of them put together, can match it in size. But how can this army be brought up to strength? The biggest one in the world? And what happens if there is no one left to harvest the crops?

I inspected my guards company, bit my lip and said nothing. I did not call the officers in for a talk. I did not speak to the sergeants. Nor did I go and meet the commanders of the neighbouring companies. I just looked at my company and that was enough.

After he has met his men, the done thing is for the commander to examine the battle vehicles and armament of the company and later its equipment and ammunition. But I didn't do that. No ... I went straight to the officers' bar which rejoices in the lyrical name 'Little Star' -which particular star is not specified, the one in the sky, the one on the shoulder-straps, or the red one on the chest.

I placed an extra crumpled rouble in the hands of a big-bosomed barmaid, and bribed her to bring me a bottle, because an officer officially should not drink. I put this small bottle under the table and gradually emptied it, in proud solitude. But it did not make me feel any happier, in fact it only increased my depression. Why the hell I wondered, did they invent this bloody system? Who invented it? However you interpret things, it is the tanks and the infantry who will fight on the battlefield, not the rocket men or the KGB people. You have to fight your enemy not with numbers alone but by your skill. And my guardsmen didn't even understand the Russian language! The language of their commander! Nor did they understand one another because all the nationalities had been mixed up. Those who did understand at least something had all been sent to the artillery or liaison a long time ago. What was the good of having this pack? Why hadn't they all been sent off to building units, that would have been much more useful! Have a smaller army if you must, but at least let them all understand one another a little better! If war were to break out, it would be a hundred times worse than the Arab troops, who could at least understand one another. What on earth was I to do with them?

Well, I thought, leaving war aside, it is peacetime and they all have to be drilled into some sort of shape. Tactics, for instance. If the pupil doesn't understand his teacher, you can't even teach him to play chess. And at least, in a game of chess, the whole situation is like the palm of your hand, any threat is clearly visible. The situation in battle is far from clear, and a threat can appear suddenly from anywhere. The enemy does not wait for you to work out your counter move, he acts and goes on acting. And payment for losses on the field of battle is not a chess title, not even a couple of million dollars, but the lives of millions of people. And everyone wants to win. The enemy is not an idiot! Each one of his moves on the battlefield he has previously worked out a hundred times over on his electronic calculator. So how shall we manage to fight? In 1941, there were no rocket troops but at least our best infantry divisions were made up of first-class soldiers. Maybe, that is why we were able to hold out. And there were also national divisions in those days - Latvian, Georgian where the divisional commanders understood Russian and that was enough. But what now?

I ordered another little bottle and, having drunk half of it, I felt so sorry for myself and my unfortunate Motherland that it was quite unbearable.

Just before the bar was due to close, two infantry captains sat down at my table. Perhaps they wanted to get to know me or perhaps they were just looking for a third drinker. I didn't answer their greeting very politely.

'New officer, eh?'

'Crying, of course ...'

'All the new ones cry in this corner ...'

'Never mind, he'll recover . . . he'll get acclimatised. All of us start this way.'

Those were the last words I heard. Probably these two captains, having understood perfectly the state I was in, somehow dragged me off at the dead of night to the officers' mess.

The same night, dead drunk, I was dragged again from the officers' mess to my own company. I was put into the commander's car, and the column moved off.

That very night, our regiment was put on alert. Our brothers in Czechoslovakia had asked for our help and protection.

The Carpathian District is transformed into the Carpathian Front. The Western Ukraine. August 1968.

On the Border Line

The grain will soon start to fall from the wheat as it stands in the fields.'

'What are the people at the top thinking of?'

'Do you think things are easy for them? The Czechs are not giving us real grounds for going to protect them. Communists still haven't been killed there and no "Chekists" have been hanged from the lamp-posts. There is no one to protect them from. So, how can we move our troops in?'

'They must consider themselves and their own country first, and not bother about some Czechs or about public opinion. It's the right time to go in and that's all there is to it.'

'Those people up there understand whether it's the right time or not.'

'They bloody well don't understand anything. If our troops are not in Czechoslovakia within a week, it'll be the end for all of us.'

'Why?'

'Because the wheat will start to fall, because there's no one to harvest it, because all the peasants and all the machines have been taken away from the Kolkhozes. And if we don't harvest our wheat everything will start all over again just like 1964.'

The Americans will help us!' said the assistant chief of staff confidently.

'And if they don't?'

They will, what else could they do?'

'In any case, they wouldn't be able to feed all of us. Did you see how many people were being mobilised! In 1964 at least some of the harvest was gathered in, but now there'll be nothing. The Americans wouldn't be able to feed all of us.'

'Don't you worry about the Americans. They're rich. They've got plenty of food. There's enough for everybody.'

Doubts about what would happen if the Americans failed to support us did not evaporate, however, and conversation to the effect that it was about time we finished these long drawn-out proceedings and let the peasants get on with the harvest kept on cropping up.

'What about letting the peasants and the whole army get on with the harvest now without delay and then liberating Czechoslovakia afterwards, in October or November?'

'That would be disastrous. It would be the end of us and the end of all Soviet power and all Socialist achievements. We have to go in now, otherwise everything will collapse, and there will be nothing left to protect.'

'They say they are building a different socialism, with a human face.'

'That's enemy propaganda,' interrupted the political deputy, 'all socialism has the same face. The bourgeoisie, Comrades, have invented this theory of compromise. This theory contradicts Marxist teaching and does not contain a single drop of common sense. You cannot sit on two chairs with one bottom, it's just not comfortable. Judge for yourselves: what compromise can there possibly be if not a single advantage can be torn from socialist achievement. You surely remember how one anti-Soviet, during the era of Voluntarism, penned an infamous slander against our regime. It was called One Day in the Life of Ivan Ivanovich or Ivan Trofimovich or something like that. What came of that? All the politically immature elements got on the move and started disseminating the slander. There was even some distrust of Party policies, and so on. It was nipped in the bud at the right time otherwise who knows how it might all have ended?'

One could disagree with that. I myself had never read about this Ivan, the book just did not come my way, but I distinctly remember that the effect it had was deafening.

'So, what did they think up, these Czech communists?' continued the political deputy. 'They completely abolished censorship. They opened the sluices to the full force of bourgeois propaganda! Let everyone print whatever they like! And where will that lead? To compromise? Not at all! To capitalism! It's enough for the bourgeois influence to make a small hole in the dam and then the flood will destroy the whole system! We've already had one small hole like that but, thanks to the Party, it was closed in time. But in Czechoslovakia it's not just a little hole, it's already a full flood of water! It must be urgently quelled. What kind of compromise is it if everyone is allowed to say just what he likes? It's not a compromise, it's sheer bourgeois anarchy!'

One could not disagree with this either. If, owing to one little story, the whole system had nearly collapsed before, what would happen if censorship were completely abolished? There is no third way - either you have censorship or you don't, either you have the necessary organisation or you don't, either with a Central Committee or without it. Really, what talk can there be of any compromise? If there is a Central Committee, that implies that there is a Party policy. The

necessary organisations protect the Central Committee and censorship protects the Party's political line. This is what socialism is all about. And, if you take away any one of these elements, the whole orderly system will collapse and anarchy will ensue with all its inherent vices, like unemployment, crises, slumps, inflation and all the rest. This is what this obscenity Capitalism is all about. Indeed, however you look at it, there is no room for any compromise or for any so-called human face . . .

'Please continue, Comrade Lieutenant-Colonel,' they shouted from the rear ranks. 'We fully support you.' The new political deputy was different from the previous one, the new one spoke persuasive good sense.

'Yes, I will continue, Comrades. There was somebody here who suggested sending the army in to do the harvesting and waiting to liberate our brothers until October. I consider this proposal disastrous for the whole socialist system. Let's say for the sake of argument that we don't liberate Czechoslovakia in the immediate future: by October there'll be nothing left there, neither socialism nor any human face. Socialism is an orderly system like a diamond and as strong as a diamond, but if the diamond-cutter makes one false move all the stability of the crystal may be shattered. In Czechoslovakia, it has already happened. The diamond is falling to pieces. But it represents one organic component of the whole socialistic camp. The diamond formed by World Socialism can also fall to pieces and very rapidly too. Bad examples are highly infectious! If the bourgeoisie triumphs in Czechoslovakia, do you really believe that Hungary will not follow her example? We've already had one example of this kind. There, too, everything started from this business of a human face. Of course Rumania is already moving further and further from Marxism. If there is the smallest change in Czechoslovakia, then the same will happen in Poland and in the GDR. We've already had this experience once. You know yourselves what kind of situation already exists in Poland! And in the GDR - I won't even speak about that! The bourgeoisie is already calling for compromise. That means removing the Berlin Wall. Isn't that so? If that's done, the immature elements of the population will all rush off into West Germany! Comrades, our revolutionary vigilance must not be slackened. The frontiers must be kept under lock and key. We must neither remove the wall, nor abolish censorship. Otherwise, you know yourselves what will happen.'

The political deputy took a sip of water from somebody's flask and then continued:

'Let's say for the sake of argument that some socialist countries break away from the socialist partnership - the infection could quickly reach

our own Baltic Republics like Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, where bourgeois nationalism is still strong, as well as the Ukraine and Byelorussia, especially their western parts, which are precisely those adjoining Poland and Czechoslovakia. I won't elaborate further. You yourselves understand perfectly well what might happen there.'

We answered him with cries of indignation. The chief of staff of the 3rd Battalion smiled foxily and then calmly asked, 'But when will it happen, Comrade Lieutenant-Colonel? For a long time now we've been ready to carry out our international duty.'

The political deputy was not confused by this new question, although he himself, of course, had not the slightest idea of the answer.

'We must be ready for the moment!'

We all applauded the gallant political deputy for organising such a successful improvised meeting.

Events were coming to a head. Everybody could plainly see that we should be going in soon, but no one knew exactly when. Two days previously there had been a secret order, for officers' eyes only, concerning the formation of the Carpathian Front on the basis of one tank, one air and two all-arms armies. Colonel-General Bisyarin was appointed commander-in-chief.

The same day we learned of the movement of the 8th Guards Tank Army from our front on to Polish territory. Our 38th Army, with which I had taken part at the Dnieper exercises, was still in the Ukraine and would probably enter Czechoslovakia from Soviet territory.

That day, we learned of the formation of the Central Front under the command of Colonel-General Mayorov. The Central Front was developing in the GDR and Poland to the west of Krakow. It consisted of two armies taken from the Baltic District and the 20th Guards Army of the Group of Soviet Troops in Germany, in addition to which it had some Polish and German divisions. Some of the Polish divisions were included in our Carpathian Front. Apparently one further front had been developed in Hungary, which was to consist of Soviet armies and Hungarian corps, plus some Bulgarian units. But, at that time, we had no definite information, we just guessed. Later I learned that a Southern Front had indeed been developed on Hungarian territory, plus an operative group called 'Balaton'. The Southern Front did not go into Czechoslovakia. It only covered and protected the active group of troops. Only the 'Balaton' group, which was more than an army and less than a front, actually entered Czechoslovakia. As part of the Soviet forces, there were also Bulgarian and Hungarian units in this group, as we used to say, in order 'to make up the furniture'.

And now the grains of wheat were really falling on to the ground.

We had already been standing in the forests for several months.

There had been training, check-ups, command-staff training and general training followed yet again by further checking of equipment. After more time had elapsed, an order was issued concerning the creation of the Danube High Command, to consist of the Central and Carpathian Fronts, the 'Balaton' group and, as a fourth separate element, two airborne divisions. For the first day of the operation, in order to ensure the success of an airborne landing, five divisions of military transport aircraft were put at the disposal of the Danube High Command.

Army General Pavlovskiy was appointed commander-in-chief, and his command post was established somewhere in Poland.

Everything was ready, but the liberation still didn't start: somebody at the top still had doubts about something, though there was really nothing to have doubts about. If we invaded Czechoslovakia it might lead to catastrophe for everybody including our own system, or on the other hand maybe not ... If we did not invade Czechoslovakia, it would lead to catastrophe for our system. There was no choice for the Soviet leadership. The first alternative was obviously the better. To drag out the liberation process was also impossible. The harvest could not wait.

Our regiment was ordered to stand to at 2300 hours. The order 'Now is our time' was passed by secret channels to all fronts, armies, divisions, brigades, regiments and battalions. Commanders were instructed to open one of the five packets in their possession and, in the presence of their chiefs of staff, to burn the other four without opening them. The operation had been worked out on the basis of five different alternatives. Now that one of them had been approved, the others lost all significance.

The directive signed by the Defence Minister ordered Operation Danube to be put into effect. Military action would be necessary, continued in accordance with the two plans 'Danube-Channel' and 'Danube-Channel-World'.

The liberation had begun.

The final stop before the state frontier. Outskirts of Uzhgorod.

White Stripes

The battalion chief of staff looked at me with leaden eyes and imperiously commanded: 'Repeat!'

I straightened myself and, clicking my heels, repeated parrot-fashion the words known to us all for so long - 'Instructions for mutual support during Operation Danube'. 'A white stripe is the distinguishing mark of our own and allied forces. All battle equipment of Soviet and allied origin without white stripes is to be neutralised, if possible without a shot being fired. Tanks and other battle equipment without stripes are to be destroyed immediately in case of resistance without prior notice of orders from above. In the event of contact with NATO troops, immediately stop and do not shoot without first being ordered to do so.'

The chief of staff moved away down the line, ordering first one then another officer to repeat aloud these instructions which had been drilled into us all. At last he finished his round, came to the middle of the formation and ended his briefing with the words:

'Comrade officers! Not shooting at NATO troops does not necessarily mean any hesitation in showing firmness and resolution! Where our first tank meets their first tank, a platoon or a company must immediately deploy into formation. If possible without firing, try to push them back from the territory they have occupied. Our task is to seize as much territory as possible. Let the diplomats decide later where the frontier between Eastern and Western Czechoslovakia is to be drawn. It is a matter of honour that we should make Eastern Socialist Czechoslovakia larger than Western Czechoslovakia. If shooting does start, do not lose your heads. It is better to retreat one or two kilometres. Do not spoil for a fight, as they too have no wish to start it. But, if the affair does come to a fight, be prepared for the worst.'

The chief of staff struck his dusty boot with a willow branch and added in a low but distinct voice:

'Any scoundrel who takes it into his head to desert to the stripeless or Western side will be immediately shot. Any attempt to eradicate our white stripes and desert to the camp of the stripeless can be dealt with with the utmost severity. This right is given to every one of you.'

Unfortunately, one must remember that the elimination of white stripes is possible, not only among Hungarian and Polish units, but among our own units too. Let's hope for the best.' And, changing his tone, he roared, 'STAND TO!'

We all rushed to our vehicles, where sergeants and soldiers were bustling about carrying out a last inspection before departure. Suddenly, from the other side of the column, a sizeable group of soldiers and sergeants who had just received their instructions from the officer of the special department of the KGB, came running towards us. Stukachi, as KGB informers are nicknamed, are always given their instructions secretly. But here, at the very frontier, the special department had apparently received new instructions, which had to be passed urgently to its executives. All around them was nothing but open fields, and no time to spare. How could they hide? The only way was to give them their instructions in sight of the whole battalion. What they were talking about was not difficult to guess: they were being given the power to kill us, the officers, if we started to wipe the white stripes off our vehicles or tanks.

I started to run as fast as I could, and saw that all my brother officers were also running. Each one of us wanted to reach the column before the Stukachi and to see them all together in a group before they dissolved into the grey-green mass of the other soldiers.

Here we come! A single tight group of like-minded individuals. We were starting to divide into smaller groups, each running towards its own company. Familiar faces - oh hell, that dark fellow! I would never have thought he was an informer. As far as I remembered, he couldn't even speak Russian. How had the KGB found a common language? And now they had melted completely into the dense mass of soldiers. Their comrades did not seem to have the least idea of the reason for their absence: they were still young soldiers and even spoke different languages. They did not understand too much of what was going on. But the KGB was not quite as silly as all that. As they were out in the open, the KGB had not gathered together the whole lot of them, only some. I would have staked my head on it that my own signals operator was a KGB informer. But he had not been called out for instructions. Maybe he had been given his instructions earlier, or maybe one of those who had attended the meeting would inform him secretly later what had been said.

Meanwhile, another dense group of soldiers and sergeants had detached itself from the armoured troop carrier belonging to the battalion commander's political deputy and run towards their machines. These, too, were Stukachi - but of a slightly different kind. They were the legal Stukachi, with their own line of responsibility.

They were Party servants. In every platoon consisting of thirty soldiers and sergeants there is a Komsomol secretary and his two assistants, plus a platoon agitator, plus an editor of the Boevoi Listok. Indeed each detachment of seven soldiers has its own Boevoi Listok correspondent.

In the same platoon, some of the soldiers must belong to the company bureau, to the company board and company agitators' group. Provided they can say at least ten words in broken Russian, then one of these positions is open to them and they become the creatures of the political deputy, or indeed of the Party. They listen to what the Party says and the Party, through the ears of the political deputy, very attentively listens to what they say about me, my comrades, my commanders and my junior officers. Looking at the insolent faces of the legal and political Stukachi, it was only too easy to guess that, only a moment before, the Party had given them the right to shoot without warning any officer who dared to obliterate any white stripes.

Now, there was one last man running from the vehicle of the regimental propagandist. He ran fast, but not so fast as to disturb his special decorum. He was nineteen years old; he had a well-shaped face, a well-shaped nose, a well-built figure, well-shaped thoughts and a careful haircut. Such men's names generally figure on the board of honour and they are elected to the Praesidium at solemn gatherings. He was a Candidate Member of Our Great Party. There was only one like him in my company. He was quite another matter. He represented a particular thread of information with direct access to our regimental political God. He was yet another man authorised to shoot me in the back, if the KGB Stukachi just happened to hesitate. And he would shoot at both the obvious and the hidden KGB Stukachi, if they faltered, and if, of course, I happened to be a second late in killing them.

The Candidate Member of our Great Party climbed into my vehicle and took his seat at my left side. On my right was a signals operator (a hidden KGB Stukachi), behind me sat the machine-gunner (an obvious KGB Stukachi), in front was the company's agitator, the Party right-hand man. The huge fuel supply vehicles pulled away with a roar from the armoured column, and we started smoothly on our way.

Invasion

Throughout the entire night, in an endless stream, the troops were marching past our armoured personnel carriers and tanks. Towards morning, in spite of the dew, our machines were covered with such a thick layer of dust that neither identification signs nor numbers could be seen; and the troops were still marching on and on.

The only command was to close up, and this was broadcast repeatedly over the air. We all knew our battle standards only too well. On the march, the distance between battle vehicles should be 100 metres and, between auxiliaries, 50 metres. So the length of one division on the march is 150 kilometres. But now, through the narrow roads of the Soviet-Czechoslovak frontier, two armies were on the move, consisting of twelve divisions in all, plus replacement and supporting units and the reserves of the Carpathian Front.

All established standards went by the board and were forgotten, for, if it had been decided to observe them, troops would not have entered Czechoslovakia in less than a week. 'Close up!' This categorical demand was accompanied by highly select abuse and threats by all commanders to their subordinates. At 0820 hours came the order from the Carpathian Front commander to push off the road any broken-down vehicles, regardless of type or responsibility. Hundreds of tanks, artillery tractors and vehicles containing top-secret cypher equipment rolled down the slope. In the 79th Motor-Rifle Division, a rocket-launcher whose engine had failed was also pushed off the road.

At 0930 hours the 38th Army commander ordered all repair vehicles to be moved out of the column so that they could be left behind on Soviet territory. Ten minutes later a similar order, covering all three armies, was issued by the Front commander.

Meanwhile, we were still standing at the roadside allowing the first echelon to pass. The call to 'Close up' still echoed. The commanders' helicopters hung in the air over the dense clouds of dust. Divisional and army commanders, generals and officers of the front line staff urged on their hapless regimental and battalion commanders from immediately above their heads.

At noon, we were joined by the helicopters carrying the generals

from the commander-in-chief of the Danube Staff. Orders to remove regimental and divisional commanders who could not sustain the speed of marching and did not 'Close up' were issued on the spot. Battle vehicles were scattered in the gutters. Units of sappers, chemical and medical troops had already been removed from the composition of the column. But, still, thousands of tanks awaited their turn on Soviet territory to enter the narrow mountain passage and to fulfil their noble mission. A mechanised Genghis Khan was rushing headlong into Europe.

At 1500 hours our division finally received the order to start moving in column formation. By then the roads were in such a bad state that to adhere to the prescribed speed of advance was absolutely impossible. The dust was so dense that all vehicles were moving forward with their lights switched on.

Towards evening our regiment reached the state frontier, but was then commanded to position their machines along the roadside to allow the Front commander's reserve to pass.

This enforced stop allowed us to have dinner. Some weeks earlier, during the training period, provision points had been established along all directions of troop movement. And it was here that the miracles started to happen. The provision points were equipped with a monstrous capacity, to serve thousands of people in only a few minutes.

The first surprise was an unprecedentedly luxurious table containing all kinds of foreign delicacies. It was announced that from now until the end of the operation all troops would be supplied only with foreign products, which were being provided by the governments of the USA, France, Canada, Australia and their other allies.

Towards daybreak on the liberation's second day our column finally left Soviet earth-roads and reached the extremely well-surfaced Slovak roads. The dusty haze which had pestered us for nearly two days was left behind on the Soviet side, but instead there came the frenzied crowds of people. Stones and rotten eggs, tomatoes and apples, were thrown at us. Insults and curses were hurled in our wake, but the thicker the crowd became, the more abundant became our food. This was a very precise psychological calculation and Bonaparte's words that the way to a soldier's heart was through his stomach were not forgotten. The food was of the very best quality. We had never seen such multicoloured labels printed in every language under the sun. The only Russian product among our rations was, of course, Vodka.

All officers were constantly reminded that they must keep their troops' battle spirits up to the mark. But there was no need for that, first because sergeants and soldiers alike hardly understood where they

were and what was going on, and secondly, owing to the abundant supplies of food, they were all ready for battle anyway.

Most of my company's sergeants could understand a little Russian. They were generally recruited from the distant-wooded districts and had encountered electricity for the first time in the army. There was no need to worry about them. Only, after five or six hours of moving through the infuriated crowds, one of them suddenly noticed the fact that the numbers of the machines were not quite standard ones, and he asked me a question about it. I answered his question with another question of my own. I asked him to name all the republics he knew. The sergeant was one of the cleverest and quickly named Byelorussia, the Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland, France and Uzbekistan. Then I told him that, in some republics, the numbers of vehicles are not standard; and that was that. The other sergeants did not even notice the cars' number plates.

It was even simpler with the soldiers. All of them came from beyond the clouds, from mountainous kishlaks and distant reindeer-breeding farms. They did not understand not only me but also one another: all the nationalities had been mixed up with the alleged purpose of developing friendship between the peoples. They knew only ten commands: Get up, Lie down, Right, Left, Forward, Back, Run, Turn round, Fire, Hurrah.

At our next halt in the forest, during supper, I decided to fulfil the order of the political deputy and to raise morale still higher. It was not difficult.

I climbed onto a box marked 'Made in the USA', lifted high above my head a tin containing stewed beef, smacked my lips in a sign of appreciation and shouted out 'Hurrah'. In response, a mighty and joyous 'Hurrah' rushed from hundreds of throats.

The tinned stewed beef was really excellent.

The Reconnaissance Battalion of the 6th Guards Rovno, Order of Lenin and of the Red Banner, Order of Suvorov, Motor-Rifle Division of the 20th Guards Army, in the centre of Prague.
August 1968.

The Banker

Of course Lenin was truly a genius, thought the battalion commander, Major Zhuravlev. Take possession of the banks, the post office and telegraph, the railway stations and bridges. That's all very well, but there's one thing that's still not quite clear. Is it possible that no one thought of such a simple thing before he did? The Major spat on a heap of cases packed full of money and angrily kicked one of them.

The day before yesterday, in the morning, the 508th Separate Reconnaissance Battalion of the 6th Guards Motor-Rifle Division of the 20th Army of the Central Front had been the first to set foot in the streets of a still sleepy Prague. The Reconnaissance Battalion was moving fast, having left behind its radio-reconnaissance company, and as a result had considerably outstripped the advanced detachment and the main forces of the division. The battalion's task was clear and categorical: take possession of all bridges and retain them until the arrival of the main force.

The commander of the Reconnaissance Battalion, Major Zhuravlev, knew all the town's roads off by heart. For four whole months, the battalion had worked at its task with maps and models. The battalion chief of staff had a complete set of photographs of all the crossroads along the route. Before Operation Danube, staff commander exercises had been held during which all twenty officers of the battalion had visited Prague and travelled by bus along all their future routes.

Zhuravlev was in the turret of the leading tank and gazed with renewed interest at the unusually colourful town. Suddenly on the facade of an old building he noticed the huge letters: BANK.

Zhuravlev knew perfectly well the distribution of responsibilities between the division's units, and he was absolutely sure that, at the time of the 'distribution of roles', the central bank had been completely missed. This entire area was to have been occupied by the 6th Guards Division and no other troops were supposed to be stationed here.

Zhuravlev swore blind at the commanders' muddle-headedness and kicked the dozing radio operator, who had not slept for three nights.

'Closed channel to the divisional chief of staff!'

The radio operator answered after a few seconds.

'Closed channel to the divisional chief of staff, Bullfinch four, go ahead.'

Zhuravlev pressed the button on the speech control panel and, filling his lungs with air, he began:

'Bullfinch four, this is Kursk, Square 21341 - bank. I have decided to take the bank myself with a reconnaissance company and the first tank reconnaissance platoon. My deputy will carry out allotted task together with armoured reconnaissance vehicle and the second reconnaissance platoon. This is Kursk. Over.'

'Kursk, this is Bullfinch four. Okay. This is Bullfinch four. Over and out,' came the short answer, and the transmitter fell silent.

When reporting his decision concerning the modification of the approved plan, Zhuravlev had secretly hoped that the chief of staff would not agree to his decision or that he would order somebody else, his deputy for instance, to deal with the bank and not him. Therefore, upon receiving the answer, he again cursed the stupid bungling of the leadership, meaning all those higher than himself.

'Kursk two, this is Kursk,' he addressed to his deputy over the open channel. 'Proceed with task, Kursk five and Kursk forty-two, Kursk three and Kursk forty-one to the left, into battle!'

Three amphibious tanks at once turned to the left without reducing speed, while the long-range reconnaissance company left their machines and followed. The remaining column, filling the street with the roar of its engines and the clank of its tracks, quickly disappeared round the corner.

Major Zhuravlev pressed down the safety lock to point at 'automatic fire', and called out, 'Assistant to chief of staff.'

'Yes.'

'Blockade the entrances with tanks. Put one in the yard and two along the street!'

'Right!'

'Company commander!'

'Here.'

'Hand over the 5th Reconnaissance Group to the tankmen and, with the remainder, take possession of the objective. Don't touch any papers! I'll have you shot if you do! Go ahead!'

The long-range reconnaissance company rushed forward to the main entrance and knocked repeatedly at the metal grille covering the glass doors with the butts of their rifles. An old watchman in a grey uniform

appeared behind the doors. He looked in terror at the fierce faces of the men knocking at the doors. Then he glanced uncertainly behind him. He looked again at the soldiers hammering at the doors and hurried forward and opened them. The company rushed into the echoing central hall and spread out along the staircase and corridors.

For some reason, it reminded the battalion commander of that famous painting The assault on the Winter Palace.

Ten minutes later, all the bank's personnel - mostly night-watchmen—were gathered together in the big hall. Zhuravlev collected all the keys, ordered all the personnel to be searched and then locked up in the guard-room. The battalion commander went round all the rooms and sealed them with a notice reading 'Military Unit 66723'. The massive safes he secured with a secret seal: '508th Reconnaissance Battalion'. Then he personally checked the positions of the inner and outer guard, after which he returned to his command tank to report the completion of his task.

The closed channel was working normally. The divisional staff answered within a minute.

'Bullfinch four, this is Kursk. Bank taken. This is Kursk. Over.'

'Well done,' replied the divisional chief of staff, ignoring the call-signs. 'Remain there until they relieve you. A tank regiment will arrive in a couple of hours.'

'Armoured reconnaissance vehicles alone, without our help, won't be able to hold the bridges,' implored Zhuravlev, breaking regulations. He did not want to sit there in the bank - if some kind of papers were lost, it would be his fault and he would be shot. So he tried every means to get somebody to replace him - for instance the battalion's chief of staff - so that he could go off to the bridges. He could not have pretended not to notice the bank as he moved along the street, things then might have turned out badly for him: the guilty party is always found out, and who else in this situation would have been guilty if not the reconnaissance battalion commander? And so there was only one possible decision: remain himself at the bank. The manual on reconnaissance treats such a situation very clearly. Simple and easy tasks must be given to the deputy; complicated and risky ones, do yourself. Furthermore the divisional chief of staff had just confirmed it: 'Kursk. To hell with the bridges. Hold the bank. Over and out.'

The battalion commander switched off the transmitter and swore loudly. Somewhere close by, there was a short burst of automatic fire followed by three long machine-gun bursts. The sound was rather muffled but the machine-guns the battalion commander could not fail to recognize unmistakably: SGMs. Somewhere on the bridges the

Czechs had obviously fired their automatics, and then our people had replied with machine-guns. Then everything became quiet again.

At the sound of shooting, astonished, sleepy faces began to peer out here and there from their windows. Apparently the entry of several reconnaissance battalions into the town had remained virtually unnoticed, but the sound of shooting woke them up. An elderly woman stopped in front of the commander's tank, surveyed it and quietly went away. A yard-cleaner with a brush, instead of the usual home-made broom, stopped by another tank. The Czech army is equipped with the same tanks, and reconnaissance units wear camouflage overalls instead of field uniforms.

The camouflage overall had no insignia or badges and it was probably owing to this fact that it had not occurred to the inhabitants of the neighbouring houses that this was not the Czech army but something quite different. It is in any case only the 'court' divisions who wear badges, white piping and other adornments; tanks and armoured personnel carriers have no identification marks except the three-figure numbers on the armour, plus, in some cases, the identification marks of their division: a little rhombus, a deer, or oak leaves. On this particular occasion, in addition to these marks, the famous white stripes had been painted along and across the tanks. And it was precisely those stripes which had interested the elderly cleaner. He had a scar on his left cheek. For a long time he gazed, examining the tank, and then put a question to the reconnaissance troops sitting on top of the tank. The latter obviously did not understand the question, but, to be on the safe side, without answering they went down inside the tank and slammed the hatch shut. After standing beside the tank for a further few minutes, the elderly man moved away, shrugging his shoulders in puzzlement.

Zhuravlev, who had observed the scene from the bank window, ordered all the officers to gather in the central hall.

'Now the questions will begin . . . what is what, and why are we here ... I tell you now to send them all to hell or even further. I've great experience in these matters after what happened in 1956 - is that clear?'

'It is!' answered the officers cheerfully in unison, but Zhuravlev noticed that something was not clear to one of the youngest officers, the commander of the fourth long-range reconnaissance group.

'What's the matter with you?'

'Comrade Major, what about the political department's order: 'Every Soviet Soldier is a diplomat and agitator?'

'Let the political deputy do his agitating on the bridge, that is what he is paid for,' the battalion commander interrupted, 'and as long as he's not here, everybody can go to hell!'

And then, realising that his words might reach undesirable ears, he

added in a more conciliatory tone, 'We are guarding an objective of special importance and, until we get reinforcements, there is no point in getting involved in discussions. The tank regiment will soon be here, then we shall start the agitation work.'

At this point, Sergeant Prokhorov, the deputy platoon commander, rushed into the hall.

'Comrade Major! Tanks. Without any identifying marks.'

'What type of tank?'

'Fifty-fives!'

'Battalion, prepare for battle!'

Broad white stripes had been painted on all the fighting machines taking part in Operation Danube, in order to distinguish them from the same types of machines in the Czechoslovak army. Any fighting machine - tank, assault gun, armoured personnel carrier or artillery tractor - without white stripes should be immediately destroyed.

There was at least an hour before the tank regiment was due to arrive and no help could be expected from any other source. Zhuravlev looked with anguish at the approaching leading tank, whose front armour plate bore not even a trace of white paint.

The long-range reconnaissance company took cover inside the bank and the three PT-76s* prepared to meet the Czechs with armour-piercing shells.

We are done for, the battalion commander thought sadly. Why the hell did I allow myself to get such a long distance from the main force?

The PT-76 barrel was smoothly lowered a little, and the turret slightly turned. It was ready to fire.

Convulsively, Zhuravlev pressed the button of the tone generator: Don't shoot!

Perhaps, he thought, the incident will pass peacefully. When the time comes to engage the Czechs perhaps our people will arrive, maybe the Czechs will not open fire first? And it did look as if the leading tank had no such intention because its gun was still pointing at the sky, and the tank commander himself was clearly visible on the turret. The tanks were approaching quite fast, knocking sparks out of the old blocks of the roadway with their tracks. The column seemed endless, as more and more tanks appeared from round the corner and engulfed the narrow street with the suffocating stench of their exhaust gases.

'Comrade Major, they look like ours.'

'Of course they're ours, look at their dirty overalls.'

'What the hell! They've arrived much too early.'

*The PT-76 is an amphibious reconnaissance tank. For that reason, it possesses neither heavy armour nor an impressive armament. In comparison with the T-55, it is utterly defenceless.

'Hello, lads!'

'Salute the liberators!' The head tank turned sideways and then stopped, leaving the way open for the column.

Zhuravlev and his escort hurried towards it.

A broad, impudent and utterly filthy face appeared from the turret. His overalls were soaked in oil - he was Russian. He was about forty, which meant he was not an ordinary soldier, but who knew what kind of shoulder-straps he had under his overalls? Perhaps he was an over-ripe junior lieutenant. On the other hand he might be a young colonel; one could only guess. If he was in the leading tank he might be the battalion or even the regimental commander. In overalls everybody looks the same.

'Why the hell are you roaming about over this brotherly country without any white stripes, like some counter-revolutionary?'

'We were in the reserve, they didn't want to bring us in but later they decided to do so, and by then there was no white paint left,' said the dirty-faced fellow, with a conciliatory grin.

'You bugger, I nearly hit you with our armour-piercing shells. Thank God your face is Russian and your overalls are dirty. You might at least have had a white stripe on the leading tank.'

The dirty-faced man looked contemptuously at the reconnaissance tanks: 'You and your advice can go and get stuffed.'

The passers-by listened with astonishment to all this foreign conversation, and the most intelligent among them clearly sensed that something was wrong. Meanwhile the head of the tank column had stopped and those behind were catching up and taking up positions straight across the tram-lines.

'Did you come to reinforce me?' Zhuravlev asked.

The dirty-faced tank commander raised his eyebrows in astonishment. Like most Soviet commanders he was pretty ill-bred and boorish, and he didn't bother to answer. Zhuravlev spat.

'Who are they?' the divisional chief of staff shouted into the receiver. 'Our first tanks are expected to enter Prague in about thirty minutes!'

The battalion commander switched off the transmitter, summoned his escort and went to find out who those tankmen were.

'Look here, lads, aren't you from the 6th Guards Division?'

'No, we're from the 35th.'

'Where's your commander? There's something wrong!'

'He's there,' said a young soldier, pointing at the dirty-faced fellow with whom Zhuravlev had just had such a nice chat.

'What's his rank and post?'

'He's Major Rogovoy, the regimental commander's deputy.'

Zhuravlev approached him again.

'Comrade Major' - this time Zhuravlev addressed him officially - 'I am the commander of the 6th Guards Division's Reconnaissance Battalion. I have just been informed from HQ that your regiment is not in its proper position.'

The dirty-faced officer whistled. A commander can commit no worse error than to take his unit to the wrong place, and Zhuravlev's words produced the appropriate effect. Quickly, he produced his map and opened it out. Right in the centre of the map, there was a big red oval with an inscription in black: '35th Motor-Rifle Division.' Slightly higher up, in sprawling handwriting, there were the words: 'Confirmed by the Chief of Staff of the 20th Guards Army, Major-General Khomya-kov.' There was no doubt about it, the tankmen were exactly where they should be.

'Right then, take over the bank,' said Zhuravlev. 'It's on your territory. It looks as if I am the one who made a mistake.'

'I don't know anything about a bank, there was nothing about capturing a bank in my assignment. Telegraph, yes - telephone also -but not a word about a bank!'

'Since it's on your territory, you've got it. I don't bloody well want it. My guardsmen will be off in a moment. I've been ordered to take possession of the bridges.'

'Seizing the bridges is the task of our division's reconnaissance battalion,' the tank man said confidently, 'and we came to reinforce them.' Once again, the tank man pointed at the map. The circle covered the bridges as well, there could be no doubt about it.

'Look here, does your reconnaissance battalion not have any white stripes on its armour as well?'

'I believe so, why?'

'I think that just now our two reconnaissance battalions were shooting at each other!'

'Oh, come off it!'

'I tell you!' Zhuravlev was hurriedly opening his map, trying to find his mistake. But on his map there was just the same red circle covering the town's central points together with the bridges. Exactly the same inscription was at the top: 'Confirmed by the Chief of Staff of the 20th Guards Army, Major-General Khomyakov.' The only difference was that on Zhuravlev's map was written the 6th Guards Motor-Rifle Division and not the 35th.

The commanders swore simultaneously. The army staff had given the same task to two divisions, and one of these divisions had no markings.

'Show me your photographs,' said the dirty tank man, laying out his own photographs on a board. The two sets of photographs were

absolutely identical. They showed the same crossroads and in the very same order.

'But why didn't we see your reconnaissance battalion?' said Zhuravlev in surprise. 'It must have followed the same route.'

'Who the hell knows! Maybe there was something wrong with its route too!'

Both commanders ran to their machines to inform headquarters about the misunderstanding which had just come to light. But headquarters had already realised for itself that a great many serious mistakes had been worked out a whole eight months in advance. The columns of different divisions, armies and even fronts had been mixed up together, and control of the troops had in many cases been lost. All the call signs had got mixed up as well, there were hundreds of 'Cornflowers' and 'Cupids' and 'Nightingales' and 'Simfoeropols' all using the same frequency, obstructing one another and trying in vain to shout one another down. Central Front Headquarters had issued a directive not to shoot vehicles which did not carry white stripes. Apparently, headquarters had guessed that there had not been enough white paint to go round, or perhaps they had already received information about Soviet tanks shooting at one another.

It was half an hour later when Zhuravlev managed somehow to get in contact with divisional headquarters. He was ordered to remain where he was. He was also informed that he would not receive reinforcements that day, as the division's tank regiment had got lost and probably overshot Prague.

Zhuravlev again visited the dirty tankman from the 35th Division. The latter told Zhuravlev that he could not contact his headquarters. The lines were blocked. Zhuravlev described the general picture to him and invited him to the bank for a glass of 'tea'.

To hell with your bloody bank! You'd better come and see me this evening. I've something to really entertain you with.'

Whereupon they parted.

Friendship between Soviet officers usually blossoms in such situations.

Meanwhile crowds were filling the streets. Young and old, men and women, they all rushed towards the Soviet tanks.

'Why did you come?'

'We didn't call for you!'

'We can solve our own problems without tanks!'

The soldiers really had no way of answering these questions, and they did not try to, except occasionally.

'We came to protect you.'

The Americans and the Germans want to take you over. Have you really forgotten the war already?"

'Well, you come when they do start to take us over!'

The officers, especially the political activists, plunged into the crowds, but without any noticeable success.

'We were invited in by your own government.'

'You just name one member of the government who invited you to interfere in our affairs.'

'Comrades!'

'We're not your comrades!' And the political deputy was struck in the face. He reached for his pistol, but the soldiers pulled him back out of the crowd.

'Bloody fascists!'

'It's you who are the bloody fascists!'

'You brought your own country to a state of starvation and now you want all those around you to sit and starve!'

'Those are only temporary difficulties, later things will be much better in our country.'

'And without you it would have been better than ever!'

'Get the hell out of here, wherever you came from! And take your Marx and Lenin with you!'

'Citizens, keep calm!'

'Go to hell!'

'Citizens, by your unreasonable behaviour, you are putting all the victories of socialism on the verge of . . .'

'Your socialism should have been tested on dogs first, just as all normal scientists do. Your Lenin was stupid and no good at science.'

'Don't you dare speak in such a way about Lenin!' A rotten egg landed smack in the middle of the political deputy's red face.

'But if Pavlov had been given the task of introducing communism, he'd have quickly proved, by experimenting on dogs, that this way of life isn't suitable for a living soul!'

At the very back of the column, the discussion had taken on an even more agitated form. Youths were hurling stones at the last three tanks, forcing the crews to hide inside, and then with crowbars had broken open the spare fuel tanks which are fixed to the outsides of tanks during long advances. A minute later, the last but one tank began to smoke, and then another. Disorganised shooting could be heard. The crowd reeled back from the last tank, but only for a moment.

Two crews tried vainly to put out the flames while the third tank swivelled its turret sharply round, trying to throw off the youths who had climbed on to it. Two platoons of tankmen from the centre of the column fought their way through the crowd to help their comrades.

'Keep clear! The shells in the tanks will start exploding at any moment!'
'You bloody fascists!'

Zhuravlev, who had watched all this from the bank window, secretly rejoiced at the others' misfortune. Why the hell start a discussion? You've come here to liberate them, so get on with it. Don't start any political discussions!

The reconnaissance tanks of Zhuravlev's battalion were standing there too. But the crowd somehow didn't notice them. The soldiers were obediently carrying out their orders and swearing at everybody right, left and centre. The Czechs either understood the tones only too well, or else preferred not to carry on any discussions in such tones, or they were simply convinced that they would be unable to out-swear the Russians. In any case the people just did not linger near the reconnaissance tanks. All the swearing and scuffles took place in the tank column itself at those places where the political deputies were especially active, trying to convince the people of things that they did not even know for sure themselves.

'Stalinism and the personality cult in general were accidents in our history! Like hell, they were! For thirty years out of fifty, it was Stalinism. And how long during the last twenty years did you live without a cult? Without the cult of Lenin, Khrushchev and the others?'

'And why is there no personality cult in America? And never has been?'

'There is imperialism in America, Comrades, and that is much worse!'

'How do you know it's much worse? Have you ever been there?'

'Why is there a personality cult in every single socialist country from Cuba to Albania, from Korea to Rumania? All these countries are different: their communism is also different, but the personality cult is always the same. It all began with the cult of Lenin

'Don't you dare insult Lenin! Lenin was a genius for all mankind!'

'Lenin was a pederast.'

'Silence!'

An old man with a little wedge-shaped beard twisted one of the buttons on the regimental political deputy's tunic.

'Now don't go and get too excited. Have you read Lenin?'

'Of course I have!'

'And Stalin?'

'Ah . . . Ah . . . well . . .'

'Well, my old lad, you read them both and count how many times each of them uses the word 'shoot'. There are some very interesting

statistics. Did you know that, in comparison with Lenin, Stalin was a pitiful amateur and ignoramus. Lenin was an out and out sadist, one of those degenerates who happens only once in a thousand years!' 'But Lenin didn't annihilate as many innocents as Stalin did!' 'History stopped him in time. It removed him from the scene at the right time. But remember that Stalin didn't let himself go completely from the very outset, but only after ten to fifteen years of unlimited power. Lenin's start had much more impetus. And, if he had lived longer, he would have done things which would have made Stalin's thirty million dead look like child's play in comparison. Stalin never, I repeat never, signed orders authorising the killing of children without trial. And Lenin did so in his very first year of power, isn't that so?' 'But, under Stalin, children were shot in their thousands.' 'That's right, Comrade Colonel, quite right, but you just try and name me at least one child who was shot without trial on Stalin's orders! There you are, you can't say anything! I repeat, Lenin was one of the most bloodthirsty degenerates who ever lived. Stalin at least tried to conceal his crimes, not so Lenin. Stalin never gave official orders for the murder of hostages. But Lenin killed children as well as hostages and never felt the least compunction about it. Lenin, Comrade Colonel, should be read attentively!' 'But now you're criticising not only Lenin and Stalin but Marx too!' 'What's the difference? Marx or Mao? Of course, neither of them called for the deaths of millions of innocents. But both Lenin, and even more so Stalin, didn't call for them either in their pre-revolutionary writing. In Lenin's works, the word 'shootings' appears only after the October revolution, and in Stalin's works it never appears at all. But you, my fine fellow, must agree that, where any form of communism appears, with a human face or without it, it always engenders a personality cult. Always! It is a rule with no exceptions. Of course, if it appears in France or Italy, the shooting of millions of people will not start at once, the conditions are different. For the time being! But if, as Marx taught us, communism eventually wins in the majority of all developed countries, such atrocities cannot be avoided, and there will be nobody left to be ashamed. There will always be a personality cult. There will always be a Mao or a Fidel or a Stalin or a Lenin. And the cult will always have to be defended by strength and by terror, a great wave of terror. The freer the country previously, the greater will be the terror. Your ideas are beautiful but only in theory: in practice, they can only be thrust upon people with tanks and brute force like yours, Comrade Colonel!' 'You . . . you . . . you're an Anti-Soviet! That's what you are!' 'And you . . . You are a Marxist-Leninist which, translated into human language, means a child murderer!'

A rotten tomato flashed through the air and landed on his peaked cap and splashed itself all over the colonel's face.

The crowd pressed close again. Somewhere, in one of the neighbouring streets, came the sound of renewed firing. And a light breeze from the river brought with it the smell of burning rubber.

At first glance, and before taking into consideration the huge responsibility involved, work in a bank may not seem too bad. There is a washroom with hot and cold running water, and it is a big house with railings. You are not taunted with stones or with rotten eggs: but, what is even more important, you can have a good kip after so many sleepless months. From his very first day in the army, Zhuravlev had understood that no one is ever compensated for lost sleep - if you do manage to snatch a couple of hours, it's yours; if not, no one will ever give it to you. Besides, this first night in Prague promised to be a very disturbed one. He checked the guard once more, looked through the window at the seething town, and then lay down on the sofa in the director's office.

But they did not let him sleep. About ten minutes later, in ran his personal driver, Junior Sergeant Malekhin, to report that two armed Czechs wanted to speak to him. Zhuravlev seized his automatic and carefully looked out into the street. At the entrance to the bank between two reconnaissance tanks stood a van with grilled windows, and two Czechs with pistols in their holsters were quarrelling with the sentries.

'But they've come to deliver money.'

The junior sergeant just shrugged his shoulders. He didn't understand.

Zhuravlev had an irresistible desire to yawn, but those two Czechs with pistols were trying hard to explain something to him. Then a third man appeared and, in front of the battalion commander, opened a carton crammed full of money. He indicated that his whole van was full of such cartons.

The bank is not functioning,' explained the battalion commander, 'and will not be functioning. I arrested your people here but later let them go. Those were my orders. I can't accept your money.'

The three men with pistols held a long consultation between themselves and then threw a heap of cartons from the van straight on to the steps of the bank. One of them shouted something which sounded very offensive and the van vanished round the corner, clearing its path through the crowd with an unpleasantly shrill hooting.

Zhuravlev swore viciously. Then he ordered the sentries to bring all the cartons inside.

Fifteen minutes later the saga of the cartons was repeated. This time, the battalion commander understood that it was useless to argue and he just pointed in silence at the bank's door. The collectors threw their precious cargo straight on to the floor and then left without saying a word. Zhuravlev merely noted the van's number and the quantity of packages.

Then a whole flurry of black vans with grilled windows drove up. The mountains of cases, cartons and leather bags containing money grew menacingly. The collectors generally did not ask for receipts, but when they did Major Zhuravlev resolutely sent them to the devil and told them to take their packages with them. After some hesitation they threw everything on to the common heap.

It was difficult to understand where so much money had come from. On the first day of the liberation, the country was totally paralysed. Probably the money now flowing into the bank was from the previous day or even earlier. Long after midnight, when the last vehicle arrived, the mountain in the central hall recalled a picture of an Egyptian pyramid taken from a children's history textbook.

Sensing the inherent risk in the present situation, Zhuravlev dismissed all his sentries from the bank; the guard remained outside, while he alone was inside. It was safer that way.

There was no possibility of sleeping. Throughout the night Zhuravlev wandered about with a big bunch of keys among the depositories, opening armoured doors and steel grilles and locking them again and placing his seals on them. At his express wish the whole alarm system had been switched off by the nightwatchmen before he let them go.

It is an astonishing thing to wander alone about the vaults of a large bank. Zhuravlev came across gold bars marked with the Soviet hammer and sickle and with Czech lions, and gold plates with long serial numbers and the inscription 999.9, and thousands of the most varied coins. But most interesting of all was the foreign paper money.

He was absolutely indifferent towards money as such, but the intricate designs and the unequalled colour range attracted him. He spent hours on end studying notes which depicted kings and presidents, women and flowers, and thoughts of some unknown civilisation rose up in his imagination.

During all his thirty-two years he had seen quite a bit of the world. He had been in Siberia and the Far East, in Kazakhstan and in Polar regions. He had also studied at the academy in Moscow; he had taken part in parades in Red Square and in many of the largest training exercises. When he was twenty and still only a sergeant, he had found himself in Hungary, right in the centre of Budapest, in the very centre of that hell of fighting for the liberation of that brotherly people. Later

still, he had served all over the Soviet Union. He served well: he went to Germany, and now finally he was in Czechoslovakia. During his lifetime, he had seen quite a number of those 245 million inhabitants. How often would you meet a man who had been in two foreign countries? And Zhuravlev had now visited his third country.

Once again he studied the designs on the crinkly notes and he felt a vague unease. These notes bore witness to some other completely unknown and unusual life. Every one of them had travelled a long way and lived a long life before landing in the vaults of a Prague bank and into the hands of a Soviet officer-liberator called Aleksandr Zhuravlev. Very soon all of them would be scattered abroad, and they would again return to their own mysterious world, while Major Zhuravlev would still be guarding all the honest people in his world. He would become a lieutenant-colonel and maybe even a colonel and then he would be retired from the army and tell colourful stories of his career to anyone who cared to listen.

Zhuravlev was awakened by a distant, regular and heavy knocking sound. Brought back to reality, he rubbed his eyes and ran down to open the heavy door. In came Lieutenant-Colonel Voronchuk, the chief of divisional reconnaissance. The sky was already clearing in the east and a pleasant coolness pervaded the air.

'Come in, come in.'

Quite recently, Voronchuk had been the reconnaissance battalion commander while Zhuravlev was his first deputy. Before this particular operation, during the shake-ups and rearrangements and replacements, both men had advanced one step higher on the service ladder. But this promotion did not interfere with their long-standing friendship.

'Well, banker, how's the battalion? It hasn't run away yet?'

'The ones with me haven't, but the ones with the political deputy, God knows what they're doing.'

'There's no political deputy any more. He's been taken to hospital. They smashed his head in with a brick this morning.'

'Was he busy agitating?'

'He was busy doing it himself and also urging all the other soldiers and officers to do the same, which is why quite a few of our people were beaten up on the bridges.'

'And who was shooting over there this morning? I'm cut off here and know absolutely nothing about what's happened to my companies.'

'The Czechs started the shooting and then two reconnaissance battalions were shooting at each other. The 35th Division hadn't got enough white paint, so some of your falcons had a go at them. Fortunately, the tanks were not at the head of the column. Still, your

fellows shot two of the reconnaissance scouts: one of them slightly, but the other's seriously wounded.'

'Like to moisten your throat a little to keep me company?'

'No, Sasha, thanks. I have to see the divisional commander in an hour to put in my report.'

'When am I to be relieved?'

'Who knows? The tank regiment lost its way and we haven't made contact with it. Two motor-rifle regiments are jammed on the road. The artillery and rear column have dropped far behind. Only one motor-rifle regiment in the whole of our division made it into town properly. But you know yourself how chaotic it all is. Generally speaking, too many units entered Prague by mistake and there's nothing for them to do here. They came in by mistake and now they don't know what to do. They can't leave the city for the time being either, since all contact's been lost. It's like a fire in a brothel!'

'Well, let's have a drink. I've got some things to suck to kill the smell.'

'Pour it out then, and let's drink to the devil!'

'After all that training, just look at the shambles. There you are, you see!'

'If the Czechs had really started shooting, it would have been worse than Hungary.'

'But our people knew beforehand that the Czechs would never shoot. They're ready to submit to anyone and they'll lie down under anybody. They're not like the Hungarians. The Czechs won't lift a finger for the sake of their own freedom. Did you notice that, when the tanks just stand about not doing anything, the Czechs consider it quite natural and even behave themselves. Only when we embark on our propaganda and mind-bending, do the disorders seem to break out.'

'Of course I noticed it. I told my men to get it into their heads not to have any truck with that kind of talk. What the hell's it all for anyway?'

'You'd better be careful, Sasha. If the political deputies find out, you won't be able to lie your way out of it or to fight your way out of it.'

'I'm doing it while he's not around my neck. When the battalion was split into two, I sent him off to the bridges.'

'In any case, be careful. Their ears are just as long as their tongues. Sometime this morning have a few chats with the Czechs just in case the soldiers sneak on you.'

'Okay, I'll do that.'

'The tankmen of the 35th Division are keeping an eye on you. They may do the dirty on you, and the political creeps aren't asleep either.'

'Who do you mean?'

'Fomin, from the second long-range reconnaissance group, and Zhebrak who's with the tankmen.'

'I had my suspicions about them. I think Fomin's in contact with the "specials", and Zhebrak's the political deputy's lapdog.'

Then there's Gareyev from radio reconnaissance.'

'Oh, him, I know about him.'

Then there's Kurakin and Akhmadulin from the BRDM Company. Kurakin for sure and Akhmadulin looks very like it.'

'I did think about them, but I wasn't sure.'

'And your personal driver, of course.'

'Oh, go on!'

'He's absolutely typical!'

'Have you got anything concrete to go on?'

'No, I just feel it in my bones. I've a special eye. I've never been mistaken yet. Do be careful, Sasha, the reconnaissance battalions are filled to overflowing with political spies. It's quite normal of course: how could it be otherwise?'

'One more for the road?'

'Okay, but this'll be the last one.'

'Your health, Kolya.'

Next day, the flood of money cartons noticeably subsided and the day after it stopped altogether. But the oppressive feeling of heavy responsibility did not pass. Zhuravlev knew how difficult it is sometimes to give an account of even one rouble, and here were all the vaults filled with gold, currency and various kinds of paper money. If some commission or other arrived, and all this had to be accounted for, a whole year would not be enough to do the job. And suppose something was missing? How could he account for all these cartons? Who knew how many millions there were? A lot of them were not even sealed. The future possibilities of all this deprived him of his sleep for nights. Zhuravlev lost his appetite, became pale, thin and pinched. The town continued to seethe. All his friends were being assaulted by volleys of stones and insults, the tanks were busy dispersing the dissident elements and trying to locate underground radio stations. They were also continuing their agitation work and preaching and defending themselves against all comers. All those who knew where Zhuravlev was were extremely envious. The nickname 'Banker' stuck firmly. But, all the time, he was getting thinner, paler and more envious of those who were out on the streets.

Three times a day, a driver brought him food: unheard-of American tinned food, fragrant bread, delicious French butter. 'You'd better eat something, Comrade Major.' 'Okay. Off you go.'

'Comrade Major, you just tell me what you'd like and I can provide you with anything you want! We've never seen anything like it.'

'Okay, okay. Off you go!'

'Comrade Major, may I just ask you one thing?'

'What's that?'

'Comrade Major, allow me to go just two blocks down the road in a tank.'

'What for?'

'There's a chemist's shop. But if I don't go in a tank our patrols will stop me or else the Czechs will bash my head in.'

'Why do you want a chemist's shop? Have you got a dose of the clap?'

'No, Comrade Major. I want some contraceptives. I'll get some for both of us.'

'I don't need them, and what the hell do you need them for?'

The driver smirked and motioned towards the bulging paper cartons.

'My right fuel tank is empty. No one has counted the money. We could invest a couple of million in contraceptives and put them into the fuel tank. Nobody would guess! Do you know how much money you can stuff into one contraceptive? It stretches ..."

'You dirty scum!' Zhuravlev grabbed his pistol. 'Throw your automatic on the floor! Face the wall! Escort, come here!'

'I was only joking, comrade.'

'Shut your mouth, you scum!'

Late that same evening, the divisional chief of staff and three others dressed in civilian clothes, plus an escort, forced their way towards the bank in a tracked personnel carrier.

'What's going on here Zhuravlev?' mumbled the chief of staff in dissatisfied tones.

'Comrade Lieutenant-Colonel, I have arrested driver Malekhin for attempted looting.'

'The comrades will investigate the matter. Where is he?'

Zhuravlev led them along a corridor towards the central hall. All three stopped dead in their tracks.

'We urgently need a radio station!'

'The driver is locked in that room.'

'We need a radio and not a driver!' the young shaven-headed 'comrade' interrupted rudely.

Zhuravlev was relieved of his duties quite suddenly and without any trouble whatsoever.

Half an hour after the 'comrades' had managed to contact their leadership, another two BTR-50Ps, packed full of officers and civilians,

arrived at the bank. Zhuravlev spent the rest of the night on external guard duty at the bank. He was never allowed inside again not even to go to the lavatory.

Early the following morning, a tank battalion from the 14th Motor-Rifle Division, which was part of the army commander's reserve, approached the bank.

The tank battalion commander gave Zhuravlev an order personally signed by the 20th Guards Army commander, which instructed Zhuravlev to take his reconnaissance battalion out of the town immediately.

Zhuravlev sighed with relief. The order also mentioned that the part of his battalion at present guarding the bridges was also temporarily removed from his command, so he had nothing to worry about at all. And, merely to remove one long-range reconnaissance company and one tank platoon, was not a difficult task.

It took only ten minutes to get ready. Zhuravlev formed up his scouts and then checked their number, armament and ammunition. The tank engines began to roar . . . but at that very moment the tall crew-cut 'comrade' appeared on the bank's steep steps.

'Hey, Major! Wait!'

The insolence shown by the 'comrades', especially in the presence of soldiers and sergeants, always irritates the army officers, but of course they never show it.

'What's the matter?'

'Sign this Major.' Whereupon, he handed over a sheet of paper covered in columns of figures. 'Don't be in any doubt, everything's in order. Our chaps were checking it all throughout the entire night.'

Zhuravlev signed without even reading or examining it. How on earth, anyway, could he have known how much of everything there was in the bank?

The young fellow smiled.

'Here you are, Major, keep it as a souvenir' - and he put his hand into his sagging pocket and held out to Zhuravlev a big gold coin with the profile of some elderly woman wearing a crown.

The Reconnaissance Battalion of the 6th Guards Motor-Rifle Division of the 20th Guards Army, to the north of Prague. First days of September 1968.

Counter-Revolution

The motor-cycle was burnt out during a drinking bout. While the platoon was cleaning its weapons, somebody brought a bottle of Czech plum-brandy, which was quickly dealt with. The cleaning session promptly became much more cheerful. After a long march, weapons were always cleaned by washing them in petrol. This method is forbidden but it is the most effective. After cleaning, there was a short break for a smoke which took place close to the bucket containing the petrol. The first section's gunner threw his cigarette-butt into the bucket and the petrol flared up gaily. The platoon commander's deputy, Sergeant Mel'nik, kicked the burning bucket, while the scouts happily laughed. But the bucket turned a somersault in the air and fell back on to the motor-cycle, whose tank was open, as the petrol used for cleaning had been taken from it. The rest happened in a single second. Only the black charred frame of the motor-cycle remained.

Their state of intoxication had been very superficial, and it evaporated at once. The whole affair started to smell not only of burning rubber and paint, but also of a military tribunal and even of a penal battalion for the culprits.

The platoon commander's deputy became very gloomy, then moved away and sat down under a birch tree, clenching his head in his hands.

The first section commander came to his senses before anyone else. Looking round, and making sure that there were no officers or soldiers about who did not belong to the platoon, he gave a firm order: 'Platoon, get into formation! In two lines! Level up! Attention. Now pay attention!'

The accident had frightened the platoon, and feeling a strong hand they formed up in quicker time than normal. Only the platoon commander's deputy stayed under his tree not paying attention to anything.

'Now pay attention!' repeated the sergeant. 'A Czech car, a Skoda, dark blue in colour with three Czechs inside it, was approaching us. They threw an incendiary bottle at us. We were cleaning our weapons

and therefore couldn't shoot back. The platoon commander's deputy did not lose his head, and hit one of them over the head with part of his dismantled machine-gun. The attacker was a fair-haired fellow. They immediately made off. Is that clear? The deputy commander is one of us, we're not going to sell him up the river. He's going to be demobilised soon and he's only been carrying out his international duty.'

The platoon murmured approvingly.

'I repeat, a Skoda, dark blue in colour, three men inside, they threw the bottle. The deputy commander hit one with part of his machine-gun. One more thing! The car number-plate had been intentionally obscured with mud. And, one last thing, a commission will come to investigate; they'll try to catch us out on details. No one should invent anything; repeat only what I have said. As for the rest: I don't remember, I didn't see, I don't know, I didn't pay attention! Clear?'

'Yes!'

'Dismissed!'

'Kolya, Kolya, don't get depressed. Maybe everything will still be all right. Listen, Kolya - better send a scout to the company commander and let him report about the Czechs. There's a conference going on there now at the commander's place. Meanwhile, tell the platoon to get ready to defend itself, as if we are expecting a second attack.'

An hour later all the company officers, including the commander himself, arrived at the platoon. After examining the terrain, the company commander ordered all the soldiers to come and see him one at a time. He was standing about eighty metres away from the others and, as each soldier approached him, he asked him three or four questions. The conversation with every soldier was *tete-a-tete* and no one could hear either the questions or the answers.

Then the commander summoned the first section sergeant.

'Not very bad weather, Sergeant is it?'

'No, Comrade Captain.'

'Only it'll probably rain towards evening.'

'Most probably, Comrade Captain' - the sergeant still could not understand what the captain was driving at. 'It's so boring, all this blasted rain.'

'Yes, it is boring,' agreed the captain. 'So you say they came in a Skoda?'

'Yes!'

'But where are the tyre marks? The earth is still wet.'

The captain was also a reconnaissance scout and to deceive him was not easy. But he did not want to have a blot on his company's record.

'Look here, Sergeant, where that bucket burned and where it flew into the motor-cycle, the earth must be dug over as if dirty oil rags had

been buried there after cleaning. And all the ground round must be trampled down. In all other matters, stand your ground!"

"Yes! Stand our ground!"

'And tell the senior sergeant not to hang his head. If he did hit a counter-revolutionary on the head - why worry!'

Neither commission nor special investigator ever appeared at the platoon. Apparently they already had enough to do. Meanwhile the company commander wrote a report about battle losses during a clash with armed counter-revolutionaries in the pay of imperialistic intelligence services.

The battalion commander turned the report over in his hands and smiled.

'Well, I'll sign everything for you, but you must re-write all this, add that there was an anti-tank grenade-launcher, an RPG-7B, as well as the motor-cycle. You'll find its number in the 2nd Company. While we were still in Poland, those scoundrels sank it in a swamp and couldn't get it out.' The captain was prepared to object but, having caught the look in the eye of the battalion commander, he only growled sullenly.

'Yes, re-write it then!'

The report went on its way through the normal channels returning every now and then for another re-write.

When the report reached the rear commander of the Carpathian Front, who signed all reports concerning battle losses, he visualised a wonder machine which had been created on the base of a reconnaissance motor-cycle, the M-72. This miraculous machine was armed with a machine-gun and an anti-tank grenade-launcher; it had two active infra-red sights, a range-finder sight and an R-123 radio transmitter. The machine was also apparently intended for work in polar conditions as two bright new sheep-skin coats were on top of it at the time of the accident; and behind it, probably being towed, there was a 200-litre barrel of pure spirit. Unfortunately, it was all burned during the clash with the counter-revolutionaries.

The general turned the report over in his hands.

'Return the report, let them re-write it, add . . . Let's see.'

'In the 128th Division a BTR fell off the bridge.'

'As the result of an incident with counter-revolutionaries?'

'Yes.'

'That's better. Give me the report.'

And the platoon commander's deputy, Senior Sergeant Mel'nik, received a medal for his bold, decisive action while repelling an attack. There was even a newspaper report about him!

Flight

During the very first days of liberation, when troops were almost constantly on the move, our battalion stopped one night near a small town where there was a small factory. We spent the night in a field close to the town, after first taking all precautionary measures and putting forward guard posts and mobile patrols.

Next morning a very unpleasant circumstance came to light. The small factory proved to be not just any old factory but an alcohol plant. The previous evening I had smelt that special aroma all round us in the air: the other officers also could not possibly have missed it. But, at the end of the day, everybody was so tired that we all fell fast asleep at the first opportunity.

But our little soldiers did not sleep, nor did they waste any time either. The spirit plant like all other Czechoslovak factories at the time was not operating. But at night, the town's inhabitants, not without evil intent of course, pointed out to our soldiers the way to the factory, hospitably opened the factory gates and showed them how to open the appropriate taps.

Towards morning every single soldier in the battalion was a bit drunk. But we must do them justice, no one was really stoned. Everyone understood full well that it was only one step to the field disciplinary tribunal, and that the field tribunal would operate on a war footing. So all the soldiers were not really drunk, only slightly inebriated, very merry - tipsy.

The battalion commander immediately removed the whole column from that damned place and informed the higher command about the spirit factory, which was promptly taken under special guard. At the very first halt a thorough search was undertaken. It was found that all containers, all objects capable of holding liquid, were filled to capacity with spirits: flasks, canisters, mess tins, even hot water bottles belonging to the battalion's first-aid equipment. Any alcohol thus discovered was religiously emptied out on to the road. All officers of the battalion became drivers and the column started on its way. Of course there were not enough officers to replace all the drivers, and as a result many of the armoured troop transport carriers moved over the liberated country in a slightly zig-zag manner.

Towards lunchtime, all the soldiers had sobered up. The battalion spent the next night in a field far removed from any habitation. By early morning, we began to feel that again something was wrong. The eyes of most of the soldiers were glistening like oil. None of them was drunk, but each was definitely tipsy. We carried out yet another careful search, but found nothing. There was nothing wrong in principle with the fact that the soldiers were drinking a little from time to time. You won't find any kind of prohibition in any Soviet Army manual. Under battle conditions, soldiers are entitled to have a little to drink to give them courage.

The real problem was the fact that the present situation approximated to battle conditions, but we were to fulfil a purely diplomatic function, that is to say we were to disperse people who did not wish to be liberated. And it was not really proper on our part to carry out this task smelling of drink. If the enemy propaganda machine were to find out that 400 Soviet soldiers were carrying out their noble mission under the strong influence of Bacchus, it could lead to a world scandal.

The next morning, the story was the same, and the next also. What happened was that the KGB and Party agencies found themselves drawn into the common scheme of things and did not give away the location of the miraculous alcoholic spring. In Czechoslovakia, incidentally, all these KGB and Party servants immediately put their tails between their legs and were not at all in a hurry to write reports. It was all quite understandable as everybody was armed and it would be so easy to get killed by accident, or to be run over, by mistake, by a tank at night. This kind of thing went on everywhere. The business of settling accounts was swift, regardless of the differences in language and interests.

Nor was the battalion commander in any great hurry to report what was going on as, by doing so, he would call down a mass of trouble on his head. He preferred to discover the alcohol himself, with the help of all the other officers of the battalion.

It was clear that the stocks of spirits in the battalion were huge: enough for at least one soldier's mug every day, for each of the 400 soldiers. The battalion was constantly on the move, which meant that the spirit was not in the forest and not buried underground, but was moving along with us. It was somewhere in our vehicles. But where? We examined everything millimetre by millimetre. We even checked whether the spirit was inside the armoured troop carriers' tyres. But it wasn't there.

If this regular drinking had been going on in my company alone, I might have been in very serious trouble, but it was going on in other companies as well, so I relaxed. The question of the alcohol disturbed

me only theoretically: where the hell could it be hidden? I firmly decided to locate that alcohol, by all possible means, regardless of what sacrifice it might cost. But I had only one thing to offer as a sacrifice and that was my gold 'Flight' watch. It was the only thing I possessed. And what, except a watch and a comb, can any Soviet lieutenant be expected to possess?

The watch was a splendid one and I had noticed for a long time that one of the radio men from the signals platoon always looked at it with very considerable interest. I don't know why, but I always had the impression that this man was very greedy, although I really hardly knew him.

At lunchtime, when there was absolutely no one around the field signals office and when I knew that the radio man was on duty alone inside, I entered the office. A visit by a company commander to the battalion signals office is a most unusual event. Without saying a single word I took the watch off my wrist and held it out towards him. He looked at the watch without daring to take it and then waited to find out what I would demand in exchange. Being a signals man he did, of course, speak a little Russian.

'I need the alcohol.' Whereupon I threw back my head, imitating someone drinking. 'Do you understand? Spirits.' Then I gulped, showing how it gurgles as it passes down the throat. He nodded. Even though he was a Moslem he still understood me. And apparently he also consumed his medicinal drink along with the others every day.

'Ten litres, understand?' I showed him ten fingers. 'Ten.'

He gripped the watch and said curtly, 'This evening.'

'No,' I said. 'I want it now.'

He turned the watch over and over in his hand and reluctantly returned it to me. 'Now is impossible.'

I put the watch in my pocket and slowly went towards the door, but just before I reached it I turned round sharply. The soldier was watching me leave with great sorrow in his eyes. Quickly, I took my watch and put it in his hand.

'I will take it myself.'

He nodded, seized it in a flash, wrapped it up in a handkerchief and put it in the top of his boot. At the same time he whispered a single word in my ear which I could not quite make out.

I hated the man; and yet, before coming to see him at the signals office I had sworn to tell nobody, not even the battalion commander, how I had discovered the alcohol. And so, in order not to give it all away, I did not run at once to the battalion staff, of course, but waited several hours. Only towards evening did I tap the commander's vehicle. The commander was sitting inside in complete dejection.

'Comrade Lieutenant-Colonel, would you like to take a mug of spirits with me?' It was the purest impertinence. But he, of course, forgave me.

'Where?' he roared, and, jumping up from his chair, knocked his head on the armoured roof. 'Where you son of a bitch?'

I smiled: 'Inside the radiators.'

Every armoured troop carrier has two engines and, since they both operate in extremely arduous conditions, every one of them has a very well-developed water-cooling system with capacious radiators, which in summer are filled with clear water. The soldiers had poured out all the water and filled them up with spirits. They drank it every evening by getting under the engines, and pretending to carry out maintenance.

The commander immediately formed up the whole battalion and personally went along the column opening the drainage cock in each machine. The autumnal forest was soon filled with a wonderful aroma.

And, one day later, the signals man, who had given away the secret, was found beaten nearly to death in the bushes near the signals office. He was taken urgently to hospital, and the doctors there pronounced that he was suffering from a result of an encounter with counterrevolutionaries.

After a few more days, when the other events had overtaken the signal man's case, another signals man approached me and held out to me my gold 'Flight' watch.

'Isn't this yours, Comrade Lieutenant?'

'As a matter of fact it is mine,' I said. 'Thank you - but where did you find it?'

'Apparently one of the men stole it from you.'

'Is that why you beat him so brutally?'

He looked intently at me.

'For that, among other things!'

Farewell to the Liberators

The alarm sounded at about five o'clock in the morning. It was beastly cold in the forest. Just the time to sleep and sleep, with your nose buried in the collar of your greatcoat. Slowly, I emerged from underneath my warm greatcoat - there were noises in my head after the previous day's jollifications. Not a single living soul paid the slightest attention to the alarm signal. During one short month, discipline had fallen catastrophically low.

From the depths of my memory I extracted a tirade especially prepared for just such an occasion as this, and in a low voice without any particular anger, I spoke it into the ear of the company sergeant-major, who was pretending to be asleep. The sergeant-major jumped up, not because he was frightened by my threats but only because the tirade was much too ingenious and interesting.

The sergeant-major went along the rows of sleeping men and sergeants kicking them with the tip of his boot and enveloping them in well-chosen abuse. Whenever I am awakened at dawn after a night spent in a cold forest, I always become very angry, I don't know why. The foulest curses accumulate in my throat, and now I was looking around choosing upon whose head I could pour them all out. But when I came eye to eye with the first of the soldiers, I controlled myself: there was probably even more anger in his eyes than in mine. He was dirty, unshaven, long-haired, and had not even seen hot water for many weeks. He had an automatic rifle over his shoulder and his cartridge pouches were full. You just go and provoke him now and he'll kill you without a moment's hesitation.

The officers were gathered together for a meeting. The chief of the regimental staff read out the battle orders, according to which our division was to be transferred urgently from the 38th Army of the Carpathian Front to the 20th Guards Army of the Central Front. We had to go many hundred kilometres across country and then towards evening form up to the north of Prague, in order to cover the troops of the 20th Guards Army. All tracked vehicles, tanks, tractors, and heavy armoured troop carriers were to be left behind and we were to move without baggage, using only wheeled vehicles.

The order was completely incomprehensible, even to our own chief of

staff, who had received it from the top. But there was no time for discussion. The columns were quickly formed up and the signs of readiness - small white flags - started to emerge above the commanders' hatches (while troops were moving, radio signals are forbidden). In the end, white flags were displayed over every machine. The signals man of the first machine twirled his white flag above his head, clearly pointing to the west. Once more we set off into uncertainty.

There was enough food for anxious thought. If you take the power of one unit's tanks, then in comparison that of the motorised infantry is zero. Tanks in conjunction with motorised infantry can be indestructible. At the present moment we were rushing madly over the country in our 'wheeled coffins' having abandoned our tanks. Without them, we became a zero, though still a very big one. The question arose why, and for whom, all this was necessary. Particularly as we were moving without our tracked towing vehicles, in other words without our artillery. And, of course, all this tended to prove that we were not going to fight. So where were we going and what for? Were there really not enough troops in the Prague region already?

During the short halts, while the soldiers were checking the machines and topping them up, we officers gathered in little groups and shared our worst fears amongst ourselves. None of us could make up his mind to pronounce aloud the dreaded diagnosis, but the sinister words were nevertheless already hanging in the air. 'Demoralisation of the troops has begun.'

Oh, if only the Czechs would fire at us!

In our regiments, especially those from the Carpathians, at that time there were many officers who had been in Hungary in 1956. The Soviet Army paid with its blood for the liberation of Hungary. In Czechoslovakia the price was even higher. None of the Hungarian veterans ever witnessed the faintest hint of the demoralisation of the troops which was already starting here. The point is that, when you are shot at, the situation is simplified. There is no time to think: those who wait to think are shot first.

In the early days in Czechoslovakia everything went according to plan: they threw tomatoes at us, and we fired shots in the air. But very soon everything changed. I don't know whether it was a special tactic, or whether it was a spontaneous phenomenon, but the people changed their attitude towards us. They became kinder and this was exactly what our army, created in the hothouse of isolation from the world at large, was not prepared for. There was a mutual and extremely dangerous rapprochement between the local inhabitants and our soldiers. On the one hand the Czechs suddenly understood that the overwhelming majority of our soldiers had not the slightest idea where

they were or why they were there. And, among the local inhabitants, especially the country folk, there arose an incomprehensible feeling of compassion and pity towards us. The absence of hostility towards the ordinary soldiers created in the soldiers' minds a distrust of our own official propaganda, because something did not fit. Theory contradicted practice. On the other hand, among the soldiers, there appeared and began to develop with unprecedented speed the idea that a counter-revolution is a positive event which raises the people's standard of living. The soldiers could not understand why such a beautiful country had to be driven by force into the same state of poverty in which we lived. This feeling was especially strong among the Soviet soldiers who came to Czechoslovakia from the GDR. The fact of the matter is that these select units are made up mostly of Russian soldiers. And the Russian population in the USSR fares at least twice as badly as my Ukrainian people, and many times worse than the Central Asian and Caucasian peoples, where nearly every third family possesses its own motor car.

In our second echelon divisions, consisting basically of soldiers from the Caucasian and Asian republics, demoralisation was just starting, while in the first echelon divisions, which had arrived from the Group of Soviet Troops in Germany, it had bitten catastrophically deep. Because for these Russians, particularly, the contrast between the Czechoslovak and USSR standards of living was especially striking, and it was particularly hard for them to understand why this state of affairs had to be destroyed. A certain part was, of course, played by the community of Czech and Russian languages, as well as by the fact that in the first echelon divisions all the soldiers were able to talk to one another and to compare notes, while in the second echelon divisions all nationalities and languages were purposely mixed up, thus preventing any discussion and comparing of notes.

We reached our destination at dead of night. Our very worst suppositions were totally justified. Our task consisted neither of stopping the Western tanks, nor of dispersing the violent counterrevolutionaries, but of neutralising the Russian soldiers who were being withdrawn from Czechoslovakia.

The 20th Guards Army is permanently based in the GDR in the region of Bernau, close to Berlin but completely isolated, of course. Many of my friends from the Kharkov Tank School served in its divisions. This army is the best of all the Group of the Soviet troops in Germany. It had entered Prague first and here it was now, the first to leave Czechoslovakia. It was a strange exit. The regimental colours, the staff and the major part of the senior officers returned to the GDR. Part of the battle equipment was sent there too. And, immediately, tens of

thousands of fresh soldiers and officers were sent from the Baltic Military District to the 20th Guards Army. And everything fell into place. It was as if the army had never left at all. But the majority of the soldiers and young officers from this army were sent from Czechoslovakia direct to the Chinese frontier for re-education. And the liberators were sent en masse, in whole echelons, as if they were prisoners and we their guards.

Meanwhile, new echelons with young soldiers destined to serve in Czechoslovakia were already coming in from the Soviet Union. From the very first day these soldiers were protected by high fences. The sad lesson of liberation had been learned: and all of us realised that, for the next ten years, regardless of what happened in the world, nobody would dare send us to liberate any country with a higher standard of living than our own.

The Soviet Army after the liberation.

Form and Content

Anyone who has studied at least the beginnings of Marxist-Leninist philosophy knows that a deep and indissoluble link exists between content and form. The Soviet Army more than any other army on earth is impregnated with Marxism-Leninism and, as a result, has had the opportunity of proving to itself every day that form is the very brightest and best expression of content.

Every new Defence Minister starts by changing the uniform of the whole army. During the sixty years of the army's existence there has been no exception to this rule. Every new minister has somehow to introduce himself to the army, to the Soviet people and to the whole world. Otherwise, how can he show his own dazzling individuality? For instance, when Stalin became Defence Minister, he introduced gold shoulder-straps for officers, which up to that time had been the symbol of White Guard counter-revolution. Marshal Zhukov preferred the Gestapo uniform, so he introduced it for all Defence Ministry personnel. Soviet officers in the Far East had just had time to receive the order notifying them of the new uniform and had just had their Gestapo uniforms made when the newly-appointed Defence Minister in Moscow, Comrade Malinovskiy, invented another new uniform, similar to that worn by the Americans.

Such a practice as this, especially on the scale of the world's largest army, works out extremely expensive. Tens of millions of sets of uniforms are needed for reservists in case of war. So, when uniforms are changed, not only the whole three million army uniforms have to be remade, but several millions of ready-made sets of uniform have to be thrown out from the stores and replaced by new ones. The wearing-out of old uniforms is expressly forbidden. If, in addition to a change in the cut of the uniform, the Minister also decides to alter its colour, this spells disaster for the whole sewing industry. Civilians go from shop to shop, swearing and cursing, and cannot understand why a good overcoat cannot be bought for love or money.

The situation was completely hopeless when the new Defence Minister, Marshal Grechko, came to power. This was no time for a change of uniform! It was simply a time for making both ends meet.

The country had hardly recovered from the 1964 revolution, and now it had to destroy Israel. Nasser had been fed and armed to the teeth, and all to no avail. We had to start again from the beginning. Then just when things with Nasser had more or less been straightened out, along came the fiftieth anniversary of Soviet power. To honour this jubilee there were so many ruinously expensive demonstrations of might, and so many records were established, that the country was brought to the verge of economic disaster. For instance, the meat production record was beaten in 1967, and in 1968 there wasn't a cow or a pig left throughout the whole country. And these very same records are still an anathema to this very day. Then came Czechoslovakia: so what talk could there possibly be about a change of uniform?

But the new Minister was adamant and he had a very weighty argument to back him up. What did our Soviet forces look like when they entered Czechoslovakia? They were dirty and bedraggled, dressed in greasy tunics and wearing canvas-topped boots. A liberator must be resplendent not only in deed, but also in dress. What if tomorrow we dare to liberate Rumania or Yugoslavia or even West Germany?

With such arguments as these the Political Bureau could not possibly disagree; and the decision was sanctioned on one condition. If the uniform was to be changed in the first place, then let it be the most beautiful in the whole world. Let everybody feast their eyes and be impressed, indeed astonished by it.

And the uniform really wasn't bad. It was a beautiful uniform but, as everyone knows only too well, beauty requires sacrifices, beauty has to be paid for.

The first victims of all this beauty were the junior officers.

The new caps for the new uniforms have extended peaks, which is why they were immediately christened 'SS caps'. The regimental commander looks good in his new cap and so do the staff clerks in theirs, but young officers of the line have to demonstrate to the soldiers all kinds of rifle drill on the parade ground in the self-same 'SS cap'. There is one manoeuvre when with one sharp movement you have to throw your automatic behind your back in such a way that the automatic's strap lies straight across your chest. During this operation neither your head nor your body should move, and only the hands have to do the work as if one's a juggler. It's easy for the soldiers - they've only got little caps on the sides of their heads. But the poor officer! Every time he demonstrates how to do this movement, his high 'SS cap' flies off into the dust, or into the mud, or into a puddle. Or just suppose there's a physical training run, over a distance of five to ten kilometres; platoon and company commanders have to be out in front, that's the commander's place. All the sergeants and soldiers can run unimpeded

but it is much worse for the officers. The aerodynamics of their caps are not good and, even in a slight breeze, all the officers' caps cartwheel away across the fields. And you just try and catch them! That's why all young officers began to appoint their personal armour-bearers - if my cap rolls away, you run and catch it for me!

But the 'SS cap' is worst of all during exercises. If the command 'Gas' is given, all the soldiers put on their gasmasks, and their side-caps can fit into their pockets or in their tunics, or be tucked into their belts. But what can an officer do in such a situation? Where does he put his 'SS cap'? As it is, there are far more objects hanging off him than off any soldier. An infantry officer must have an automatic and 120 cartridges, a pistol, a two-way radio, a compass, a sack, a gasmask, anti-atomic boots, gloves and a cape and an extra cape, a supply of water and food, binoculars, a commander's bag with writing board, a steel helmet and a spade. So there is absolutely nowhere left to put his cap. During the cross-country run, it can be carried in the hand if the senior commander doesn't see it, but during exercises there is always an automatic in the officer's hand, or the radio, or the writing board. You have no time to turn round; but you are not allowed to be without a cap. The cap must always be on the officer's head or somewhere near by. That's an order! There have been many different suggestions for this cap, for instance to wear it only on parade and for everyday use, but to replace it in the field with something like a beret or a side-cap. But Comrade Grechko was inflexible: beauty comes first.

Meanwhile autumn came and our soldiers felt the effects of the changes which had been introduced into the army for the sake of beauty.

Formerly, a soldier's greatcoat was plain grey. With the new uniform, the greatcoat was preserved in its original form, as invented by Tzar Nicholas I 150 years previously. But the Soviet designers decided to freshen it up with some new details. Instead of the green shoulder-straps, they put red ones for the infantry, and on the left sleeve they put a beautiful golden emblem stitched on red cloth, while on the right sleeve they placed golden chevrons, to indicate how long the soldier had served in the army, and on the chest they put six gold buttons. Of course, these were quite useless as soldiers' greatcoats are anyway fastened with hooks, and the shining buttons were sewn on top just to make it look beautiful. To wear greatcoats like these in battle was, of course, impossible. With red shoulder-straps and shining buttons, a soldier would be visible even in the bushes a whole kilometre away. To crawl through a field was equally impossible. Before, the soldier's belly was as smooth as a serpent's and he could crawl wherever you like, but

now the buttons caught on the ground. Therefore, in the end, it was decided to leave the field uniform as it was before: no buttons and plain green shoulder-straps and no red patches.

The only thing was that a soldier has only one greatcoat. In any case he serves during only two winters, and one greatcoat is quite enough for him. So what to do? The problem was reported to the Minister.

'What is the problem?' enquired the astonished Minister of Defence. 'If war comes we will cut off the buttons and change the shoulder-straps. It's quite simple.'

But the real problem is that a soldier would need to do this far too often. When during the night a division is put on alert, no one, including the divisional commander himself, knows how it will all end. Is it just a check-up on battle readiness to be followed by retreat five minutes later, or are there going to be major exercises, or is it the beginning of the liberation of Western Europe? Who knows?

Before, when the uniform was plain, only four minutes and thirty seconds were needed to waken, silently, all 300 soldiers of the battalion, to let them dress in darkness, to get their armament and to leave the barracks. No noise, great speed, and no light. It was never easy to achieve such harmony, but every battalion somehow managed to achieve it and there were even some who could do it still more quickly.

With the new uniform everything was changed. Now, at the sound of the alarm, the light had to be switched on in all barracks, which meant that when it was sounded a soldier had to run over to each window and black it out before the light could be switched on. Then, having dressed, everyone had to run to the wardrobe, find his greatcoat and return to his place, where he had to cut off all the buttons, shoulder-straps and chevrons with a razor and afterwards sew on new green shoulder-straps. Only after all that performance could he run to fetch his weapons.

Previously, after the alarm had been sounded, the commander looked round and saw that everything was normal, everybody had got up, dressed and silently taken their weapons. It was all okay. Not bad. Retreat! At this point there was no need to hurry him. The Soviet soldier values sleep more than anyone else. He knows that there will be no compensation for all these night alerts, and five minutes after retreat has sounded the whole battalion is sleeping soundly.

Things became much worse with the beautiful new uniforms. After retreat, every soldier must now sew six gold buttons on to his greatcoat, and in a special way, so that all of them have Soviet power facing in the right direction: the little hammer with the end of the sickle must be facing precisely upwards. Then he has to sew the stripes on the sleeves and then the shoulder-straps. But, in the morning at six o'clock, a new

day starts and a soldier must be ready in his beautiful everyday uniform and not in his field uniform. So there he sits, a whole hour before reveille, changing his shoulder-straps. And if he lies down for half an hour before reveille there may suddenly be a new alert and this time it could be a real battle alert and everything starts anew. Cut off the buttons and stripes and change the shoulder-straps.

A rumour reached the ear of Comrade Grechko that this uniform did not allow enough time for the alert, even if it was the smartest uniform in the whole world. Maybe something could be changed.

'Well,' said Comrade Grechko 'it's a pity of course, but something will have to be changed!'

And what was changed was the time allowed for the alert from four minutes thirty seconds to twenty-four minutes. This, needless to say, lowers the battle preparedness of troops in time of war and raises the possibility of their being caught when still in their camps, as happened in 1941. All of which is not, of course, a very good thing, though it does mean that all that beauty can be preserved intact.

Our Native Land

As they left Czechoslovakia, our divisions reminded one of the remnants of a defeated army, fleeing from the hot pursuit after a shattering defeat. What officer could look without pain at the endless columns of dirty tanks mutilated by barbarous treatment and deprived for many months of human care and attention? Our regiment had also been thinned out. While still in Czechoslovakia, many of the platoons and companies had been completely reformed into draft reinforcement battalions and sent straight to the Chinese frontier. Many of those whose term of service was shortly to expire were packed off home. Often there was only one driver left out of a whole tank crew and no one else at all.

Our native land greeted us with brass bands blaring and then promptly despatched us, whole regiments at a time, into field camps behind barbed wire. Some unknown engineer quickly examined the battle equipment, determining on the march then and there whether it needed a complete overhaul, dismantling or normal repair.

And we were examined by doctors with the same speed: fit - fit - fit. Others rummaged convulsively in our files and passed rapid resolutions: the Chinese frontier - the Chinese frontier - the Chinese frontier.

But, quite suddenly, the habitual rhythm was broken. Our sparse regiment was formed up along that broad forest clearing which represented the central road of our military prison camp. The chief of the regimental staff tediously read aloud various orders of the Defence Minister, the Military District Commander and the Army Commander.

Then, suddenly, an escort arrived and deposited a fellow out there in front of the formation. He looked about twenty years old. From the very beginning, I was astonished by the fact that, for some strange reason, he was barefoot. It was an unusually warm autumn in the Carpathians: but it was autumn all the same.

It was difficult to say by looking at him whether he was a soldier or not. He wore soldier's trousers, but instead of a soldier's field shirt he had on a peasant's shirt. He stood at right angles to the regimental line and peered myopically away somewhere far off at the blue summits of the Carpathians. He had a soldier's mess-tin in his left hand, and with

his right hand he clasped to his breast some kind of parcel wrapped in cloth, which was apparently very dear to him.

Clearly and distinctly, the chief of regimental staff read aloud from a paper concerning the adventures of our hero. One year ago he had been called up for service. During preparations for the liberation he had decided to exploit the situation to escape to the West. But, during all those re-shuffles, he found himself in one of the 'wild' divisions, which did not go into Czechoslovakia. Then, brandishing his automatic, he went up into the mountains and several times tried to break out across the frontier. For three months he remained in the mountains, then hunger forced him to return to so-called civilisation, and he surrendered himself freely of his own accord. Now he must be punished. During peacetime, fellows like him are punished somewhere out of sight. But we were on a war footing and, since his 'wild' division had long since been dispersed, he was to be punished in front of our regiment.

While the chief of staff completed reading the sentence, the executioner - a shortish, very thick-set major of the KGB in soft boots, slowly approached the deserter from behind.

Never in my life had I witnessed with my own eyes the carrying out of the death penalty and imagined it somehow quite differently: a dark cellar, a layer of sawdust on the floor, gloomy archways, a small beam of light. In life, everything turns out differently; here was a forest clearing covered with a luxurious carpet of crimson leaves, golden spiders' webs, the crystal sound of a mountain waterfall and a boundless woodland space flooded with the farewell warmth of the autumn sun.

The action unfolded in front of us as if on a stage during a performance, with the whole audience biting their lips and digging their nails deep into the arms of their chairs, watching silently as death, stepping slowly, slowly approached a man from behind. Everybody saw it clearly except the one who was destined to die. Those who say that one always senses the approach of death are probably wrong. Our soldier did not sense anything. He stood there as silently as before and listened, or maybe he did not even listen to the words of the sentence. One thing was obvious, he did not even suspect that he was to be sentenced to death. And, of course, he could not possibly suspect that the sentence would be carried out the very instant it was pronounced.

Now, after many years, I could invent some noble feelings which I experienced then, but at the time I felt nothing. I stood and, like hundreds of others, I looked at the soldier and the stealthy executioner and I wondered if the soldier would turn round or not, and whether he would see the executioner with the pistol, and whether the executioner

would shoot at once or not. The soldier was not tied up and, if he had seen the executioner behind him, he might have tried to run away, or shouted or knelt down.

The chief of staff filled his lungs with air and, clearly and solemnly, as if it was a government bulletin about the launching of the first cosmonaut, he uttered the final phrase.

'IN THE NAME OF THE UNION . . .'

The executioner smoothly cocked his pistol without a click.

'OF SOVIET ...'

The executioner, moving as softly as a cat, took another two steps forward and placed his legs apart for steadiness. Now he stood one metre away from the hapless fellow, and one felt sure that the prisoner could hear the executioner's breathing. But he still seemed to sense nothing.

'SOCIALIST . . .'

The executioner stretched his right hand forward, holding the pistol so that its muzzle nearly touched the soldier's neck.

'REPUBLICS . . .'

With his left hand, the executioner squeezed the wrist of his right hand, so as to keep the pistol steady.

'SENTENCED...'

The sinister crack of a solitary shot whipped like a lash across my back. I hunched myself up and screwed up my eyes as if I was in unbearable pain, but I opened them immediately again.

The dead soldier hurled both hands over his head, and as he performed the last upwards jump of his short life, as if trying to seize hold of the clouds, he threw back his head in a way which would have been impossible for a live man. Probably at this very last moment, his eyes already dead met the executioner's calm, piercing blue gaze. And the echo of the shot rolled slowly away towards a distant wooded ridge and fell and subsided in an odd barking noise.

The soldier's body fell very very slowly, just like a maple leaf on a balmy autumn's day. Equally slowly, the executioner stepped aside to make room for the falling body.

'TO PAY THE SUPREME PENALTY.'

And so the chief of staff finished pronouncing sentence.

The executioner adroitly extracted the magazine from the pistol and, with a jerk, jettisoned from the chamber the unnecessary second cartridge.

A burial party consisting of five soldiers, carrying spades and a piece of tarpaulin, ran towards the dead soldier. And there he was, lying at our feet, gazing with his unwinking eyes into the endless depths of the sky.

Postscript

Have you ever been acquainted with a man during that period of his life between the pronouncement of the death penalty upon him and its execution? If not, it is high time that you and I met, for I am such a man.

I am no longer a liberator. Not for me that role, nor for my country either. For it is my own firm conviction that only a country, to which people flock by the thousand from all corners of the world, has the right to advise others how to live. And the country, from which so many others break out, across its frontiers, in tanks, or fly away in homemade balloons or in the latest supersonic fighter, or escape across mine-fields and through machine-gun ambushes, or give the slip to packs of guard-dogs, that country certainly has no right to teach anyone anything - at least not for the time being.

First of all, put your own house in order. Try to create there such a society that people will not dig underground passages in order to escape. Only then shall we earn the right to teach others. And not with our tanks, but with good advice and our own personal example. Observe, admire, then go and imitate our example, if it pleases you.

These thoughts first came into my mind long ago. Perhaps they are silly or hackneyed - it does not matter, at least they are my own. The very first I have ever had.

I was most anxious that they should not perish with my life, and therefore I needed to share them with at least two other people.

But in my position that was totally impossible. We professional liberators are shot for such ideas - in the back of the head.

Of course, one can always share such an idea with one other liberator, but there would be no time left to share it with a second.

So that is why I left. I carried my ideas away with my brains intact. I prepared my escape for several years but I never really believed that the outcome would be successful. Under communist law, I am a turncoat and a traitor, a criminal guilty of the most serious crime.

I was sentenced to death in absentia by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. In such cases, the method by which the sentence is to be carried out is never specified. The executioners are

given a wide choice. They may execute the sentence by means of a car accident, a suicide, or a heart attack, etcetera, etcetera.

But first they have to find me! And, in the meantime, I am living out that last slice of my life. I am between the death sentence and its execution. It is the happiest time of my life.